

THE
S U F F E R I N G S
OF OUR LORD
J E S U S C H R I S T.

WRITTEN ORIGINALLY IN PORTUGUESE, BY

F. THOMAS OF JESUS,

BY ORDER OF THE HERMITS OF ST. AUGUSTIN;

AND

NEWLY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THE THIRD AND LAST PART, NEVER BEFORE
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P R E F A C E

TO THIS TRANSLATION.

THE following translation was made by a gentleman for his own use only, in order to pass his time agreeably by that exercise, and to entertain his mind with such proper thoughts and sentiments, as the time and place wherein he was required. The same is now published in order to do service to others, and if the work happens to please, he shall think his labour well bestowed. The book was partly translated into *English* some time ago by *R. Welton*, D. D. and printed *Anno 1721*: what still remained untranslated, chiefly engaged the fore-mentioned gentleman to translate the whole.

Much cannot be said in commendation of *Dr. Welton's* translation, because of his frothy and too affected pompous style, improper expressions, and many times running out into a great abundance of words, sometimes different from the meaning and sense of the author. He does not indeed wilfully, or out of any bad view, depart from the author's meaning; he has even left in their full force, the expressions in the addresses to the *B. Virgin*, *Angels*, and *Saints* at the end of the *Contemplations*; and he brags of having translated more honestly and faithfully than many others do. The present translator does not pretend to prefer his translation to *Dr. Welton's*, but only

says, that he has endeavoured to keep as near as he could to what he translated from; and to give it in the language and expressions he thought proper and decent for the subject.

Of the book itself, its other different translations, the design, use, and advantage thereof, F. *Alleaume* in the preface to his *French* translation of it writes thus: "This book was originally written in *Portuguese*, by a holy religious man, in the year 1578, during a severe and long captivity amongst the Moors of *Africa*, and in the actual experience of the cross. It is so full of unction and admirable sentiments on sufferings, that we need not wonder it has been since printed in so many different languages.

"When it appeared in *Portugal*, it was received with a general approbation, and regarded as a treasure of grace and light for all suffering persons. It soon passed into *Spain*, where *Don Christoval Ferreira de Sampayo* translated it into *Spanish*. From thence it spread into *Italy*, where it was translated into *Italian* by *Lewis Flori* a Jesuit. It was afterwards carried into *Germany*, where F. *Henry Lamparter*, a *Bavarian* Jesuit, had it printed in *Latin* at *Munich*, under the title of *Ærumnæ Domini nostri Jesu Christi*. And I lately heard it was put into *French*, about forty years ago, and printed at *Lyons* with this title, *Travaux de Jesus*.

"The author's design, as F. *Alleaume* observes, is to teach all suffering Christians to love their sufferings, to consider them as a treasure which God puts into their hands, and to make a good use of them. And because nothing is so efficacious for persuading to the love of the cross, as the example of Jesus suffering, he has made choice of every thing that is laborious and painful in the life of our Saviour, and has reduced the same into fifty articles, which he calls *labours*, or *sufferings*.

"Upon

“ Upon every article he does two things : First, he declares and lays open the mystery with a great deal of perspicuity ; from whence he afterwards draws such instructions as may serve for the regulation of manners and the nourishment of piety. Secondly, he pours forth his soul in affections towards Jesus Christ on each of his sufferings, and does it at once in a most tender and solid manner. So that the first part is properly the declaration of the mystery ; and the second a contemplation on Jesus Christ, wherein the soul speaks to him with a fervor, capable of inspiring the most insensible persons therewith.

“ But what is most surprising and singular in this work, is that the author could maintain such a fervor on each of our Saviour’s sufferings, for ten or twelve pages together, with affections proceeding from an almost continual equality of heat, of piety and devotion ; that those affections should neither be empty nor weak ; and that they should express, in a sublime manner, every thing that is most profound and affecting in a spiritual life.

“ As he had no books in his prison, where the infidels had scarce left him his cloaths, he wrote only what God inspired him with, and what his memory could suggest to him : So that this work will neither be found copied from others, nor filled with quotations. But instead thereof, we shall find it every where abounding with good sense, a sound and orthodox doctrine, a profound and exact knowledge of religion, a sublimity of thoughts, and a vivacity of sentiments, which, in my opinion, are not easily to be met with in other books of piety.

“ But, then, continues F. *Alleaume*, as there is no person entirely exempt from suffering ; and as, by a conduct of God full of mercy, even the most exalted stations are not free from crosses, it will be found by experience, that this book is most proper for touching sinners,

sinners, awakening the lukewarm, and supporting the just in the different troubles of this life.

“ This book may also afford subjects of meditation, since it contains the whole life of Jesus Christ, except those mysteries which are commonly called *joyful*, because the Author always treats his subject in a most affectionate and interior strain.”

This translation is printed in two volumes, each containing two parts. The first volume contains the Sufferings of Christ during his Hidden Life, and during his Public Life. The second contains the Sufferings of Christ in his Passion, and in his Death. In these different parts, we shall find instructions very helpful for rendering profitable, the sufferings that happen to us in all the different states of life.

We must suffer even in this life both in soul and body, either with or against our will, which way soever we turn ourselves, as the author of *the imitation of Christ* says. Let us therefore cheerfully take up our cross and follow Jesus Christ, that we may be like him and all his faithful servants. Let us in humility and obedience, with resignation and patience, do and suffer what God requires of us, to his Glory, for our own Sanctification, and the Edification of others. Let us consider and meditate on the Sufferings of Christ, which were for us, earnestly begging that he may join our sufferings to his, sanctifying them thereby; and by the constant supply of his Grace, prepare us by all our tribulations to enter into the Kingdom of God. May God bestow his blessing on these instructions; and grant that every one that reads them, may reap spiritual profit thereby, and have applied to their souls the merit and efficacy of the sufferings and death of their Lord for obtaining his grace here, and Eternal Glory hereafter. *Amen.*

A N



AN
A B R I D G M E N T
OF THE
L I F E

OF
Father Thomas of JESUS.

*With some spiritual advice, by the same Author, for reading the
Sufferings of CHRIST profitably.*

FATHER Thomas of Jesus was the son of *Ferdinand Alvarez de Andrada*, of one of the chief families in *Portugal*. He was but about ten years old when his father put him under the care of *F. Lewis de Montoya*, a religious man of great virtue, of the order of the hermits of *St. Augustin*, to be brought up in the fear of God, and study of learning. At the age of fifteen, he took the habit of the same order, in the monastery of *Our Lady of Grace* at *Lisbon*. Having finished his studies of philosophy and divinity at *Conimbria*, and afterwards preached with great fruit, he was made master of the novices: he directed them with so great a care and success in the practice of solid virtues, and particularly in the love of God and prayer, that the whole order, in process of time, reaped a considerable advantage from so holy an education.

As he perceived some of his religious, touched with the desire of a greater perfection, going into *Italy*, because there were certain monasteries there of that order, wherein the religious

religious lived in greater retirement, and in all the severity of their first spirit; his zeal for the rigor of observance, caused him to undertake a like establishment in *Portugal*.—Father *Lewis de Montoya* greatly approved of that design; and cardinal *Henry*, who was afterwards king, supported him with his protection: but *F. Thomas* met with such great obstacles in the execution thereof, and so dreadful a storm was raised against him, that he was obliged to quit his undertaking, even by the advice of those persons who were most favourable towards it. He suffered this persecution with a silence, meekness, and peace of mind, which edified every one; he returned several good offices to those who had opposed him; and he once answered a friend of his, who seemed surprized thereat, that in order to do our neighbour a kindness, we must not regard his conduct towards us, since God does not expect our merit for communicating his grace to us, but bestows upon us a thousand blessings, even when we offend him.

He slept little, and applied himself so much to prayer, and to the reading of the fathers of the church, that in a short time he became very learned in the knowledge of the saints; and he received from God a particular gift, for making others relish the same. He had a great zeal for the advancement of God's service, and extraordinary charity for the poor and sick; and these virtues acquired him so great a reputation throughout the kingdom, that king *Sebastian* made him quit his solitude, and accompany him in that unfortunate expedition into *Africa*, in the year 1578. He was a wonderful help to the whole army, by the care he took in preventing disorders, and assisting the sick, both as to body and soul. Whilst he was exhorting the soldiers in the heat of battle, to fight valiantly against the infidels, he was wounded by an arrow in the shoulder: he was afterwards taken by a *Moor*, and sold to a *Morabut*, which is the name given in that country to the Mahometan monks. This *Morabut* treated him at first very mildly, and promised him great things, that he might engage him to renounce Christ; but seeing this artifice did not succeed, and that on the contrary he had great difficulty himself to resist *F. Thomas*, who urged him to embrace the christian faith, by shewing him clearly the absurdity of that of *Mahomet*, he had recourse to violence; he stript him of his cloaths, loaded him with chains, and threw him into a frightful prison, where he caused him to be cruelly beaten, and allowed him no more food than what was necessary for keeping him alive.



It was there that F. Thomas of Jesus composed this book of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, for the support and comfort of his captive brethren, whom he could not help any other way. He laboured in this pious work, only for some hours in the middle of the day, by the help of a faint light which he received through an air-hole of his dungeon. The *Morabut* far from becoming better natured towards him, redoubled his cruelty every day, resolving to deprive him of life by torments, if he could not deprive him of Jesus Christ.

Don Francisco d' Acoſta, whom King Henry had ſent into Morocco in quality of ambaffador, to treat about the redemption of captives, having underſtood the miſerable condition Father Thomas was in, delivered him with great difficulty from the *Morabut's* hands, and placed him with a chriſtian merchant, that he might recover his ſtrength. He remained not long there, but went a few days after to Morocco: where as ſoon as his arrival was known, the Portuguese nobility that had been taken in the battle, and expected their ranſom, would willingly have retained him with them; but by his entreaties he obtained the favour of being ſent to the *Sagena*, which was the priſon of the poor chriſtian ſlaves, where the ſheriff detained two thouſand thereof of different nations; and he affirmed that he ſhould ſooner recover there than in the miſt of conveniencies and plenty. What he foretold came to paſs: for in a very ſhort time he recovered his perfect health; and then wholly employed himſelf in the comfort and ſervice of thoſe miſerable perſons. When they returned from their labour, and at thoſe hours wherein their maſters allowed them to breathe a little, he aſſembled them, by the ringing of a little bell, in order to make them pray to God, and to inſtruct them; all their exerciſes were ſo regular, that this place ſeemed more to reſemble a religious houſe than a priſon of ſlaves. He begged alms of the rich for the poor, reconciled differences, prevented diſorders; and his only grief was to ſee, that many of them, in the miſt of ſo lamentable a ſlavery, ſtill lived in an extreme licentiouſneſs.

His charity was not confined to chriſtian ſlaves; he viſited thoſe who had apoſtatized, exhorted them to return, and forgot nothing that was capable of making them re-enter into the way of ſalvation. God gave ſuch a bleſſing to his labours, that ſome having abjured their errors, returned to the chriſtians; and that others ſuffered death in defence of the faith. Peter Navarre was one of the moſt conſiderable: he was of Madrid,

Madrid, and had become *Mahometan* in *Africa*. The sheriff who had a particular regard for him, had giving him a post, and he was called among the *Moors*, *Alcaide Amet*. As he was attempting to withdraw into a christian country, with several slaves that were under him, he was taken and brought back to *Morocco*, where after suffering dreadful torments, he was at last fastened to a cross, and confessed Jesus Christ until his death. *Antony Mendez*, a *Portuguese* ecclesiastic, having been made a slave with *F. Thomas*, had profited so well by his doctrine and example, that he succeeded that holy man in zeal and charity; and after him performed the same services to the poor christians of *Barbary*. He suffered martyrdom at last in the city of *Morocco*, with seven young *Portuguese*, who having been taken at the battle of *Alcazera*, were made pages to the sheriff.

F. Thomas had been a captive in *Africa* about four years; and during all that time, the countess of *Linares* his sister, and his other relations, had endeavoured to procure his freedom. King *Philip II.* had even recommended this affair to *Don Pedro Venegas de Cordoua* his ambassador at *Morocco*, and they had begun to treat about his ransom. So soon as *F. Thomas* knew it, he declared that whether he was free or a slave, he was resolved to die in the service of the christians, who were captives in *Morocco*; that they would do him a great pleasure, if they employed that money in redeeming others, to whom that favour would be more necessary; that for his part he esteemed himself happier without comparison, if he could live and die a slave for the salvation of his brethren, than to obtain his liberty. He wrote in the same manner to those of his relations, who interested themselves most for his delivery; and particularly to a nephew of his, who was a religious man, earnestly entreating him to obtain the favour of his family not to think of procuring his liberty; being well persuaded that God would have him remain in that state, wherein he himself was very content, and had no other displeasure in it than to see himself more favourably dealt with than the other slaves, on account of the care and concern which the *Portuguese* ambassador had for him.

To the painful employments of his zeal, and the rigors of his captivity, he added also those of penance; fastings and disciplines were common to him; he never interrupted his exercises of mortification, and he augmented them during the time of Lent, altho' he preached every day, which brought
upon

upon him a very severe sickness. Perceiving immediately that the end of his life approached, he prepared himself for death in a most pious manner, and received the sacraments of the church on *Thursday* in holy-week: and the *Portuguese* ambassador visiting him on *Good-friday*, F. Thomas most earnestly recommended the poor captives to him. The extreme weakness in which the ambassador found him, induced him to believe that he had only some few moments to live; and either out of friendship or from a desire of seeing how the saints die, he staid with him in order to be present at his death; but F. Thomas having assured him, that his hour was not so near, and that he should not die till after *Easter*, Don Francisco d' Acoſta departed.

On *Easter-monday* the sick person being acquainted, that some slaves, weary of their slavery, and despairing of being ransomed, intended to become *Mahometans*, he sent for them to his bed-side; and gathering up the little strength which remained in him, he exhorted them to perseverance, shewed them the day in which their ransom was to come, and made them promise that they would not renounce Jesus Christ. A moment after his strength failed him, and pronouncing the name of *Jesus*, he meekly gave up his soul to God, on the 17th of *April* 1582, in the 5^d Year of his age, and the 4th of his captivity. The ransom of those slaves came on the very day that he had foretold it.

F. THOMAS'S SPIRITUAL ADVICE.

C H A P. I.

Instructions concerning the fruit which we are to reap from the consideration of the sufferings of Christ.

IT happens but too often, that those who aspire to christian perfection, are deceived in their manner of taking spiritual things. When they read the acts of the saints, and consider their austerities, their fervor, their extasies, and the other extraordinary favours which the Holy Ghost operates in those mortified souls, they are charmed with what is wonderful in them, without considering what was the foundation of that great edifice, and the way by which they arrived at that sanctity. This is an error so much the greater in our time, as matters of piety are become more common, and every one speaks of them, though very few people apply themselves seriously thereto, or know them by experience.

II. What contributes to establish this opinion is, that God, who is always wonderful in his works, often communicates himself with so much sweetness and light to those who begin to serve him, that when they come to judge of their advancement, by those first impressions which were so sweet and sensible, they easily imagine that they have made great progress in virtue; like a man ignorant in painting, who beholding the first sketch of some excellent painter, looks upon it with admiration, and imagines the work already finished; whereas another who is skilful in that art, would judge that it requires still much time and labour to compleat it: so those persons, deluded by some relation which they find betwixt the good sentiments wherewith the mercy of God prevents them, and what they have read or heard of the interior state of the saints, imagine themselves already perfect, erect a fabric without a foundation,

foundation, and at last discover by fatal relapses, how much they were deceived.

III. Three things commonly discover this deceit: The first is a certain security, to which they falsely give the name of peace, on which they so firmly depend, that they no longer give ear to the counsel of any one; and that they easily judge and condemn others under a pretence of zeal: although the saints teach us, that in the ways of God we must consult experienced persons; that it is being very remote from contemplation, to abound in one's own sense; and that the characteristic of true virtue, is to have a great regard for our neighbour, and contempt of ourselves. The second thing, which is a consequence of the first, is the attachment to their own will, which renders them incapable of suffering the least contradiction, under a pretence of loving the truth; so that they are commonly impatient, nice, censorious, ready to blame others, and to excuse their own faults, so as to be willing often to make them pass for virtues; and yet it is certain there is no virtue without denial of one's own will; without patience, meekness, and silence. The third mark of their mistake is, that they are so possessed with the beauty of their own way, and with the consolation they feel in the exercises of piety, that they do not apply themselves to the practice of christian virtues, but even look upon them as an impediment, although they are the solidest fruit of spiritual exercises, and as it were the nerves and traces of an interior life.

IV. A whole book would be necessary to shew all the dangers to which those souls are exposed; the grievous falls which they ought to fear, and the means of preventing them, or of recovering themselves from thence. The chief is fully to know the substance of a spiritual life, and to regulate one's whole conduct thereby. Now this life consists in two things, mortification, and the love of God. That mortification which does not kindle love is suspicious; and that love which mortifies not, deserves not the name of love. He that would approach to God, must not separate those two things, which are at the same time the foundation and height of perfection:—but because God and the soul concur together in free actions, hence it is, that the interior life is subject to many illusions, from the difficulty there is in distinguishing what proceeds from God and what from man.

Wherefore

Wherefore he that would walk surely, chiefly applies himself to mortification, is careful of dying to himself, and leaves to God, who is faithful in his promises, and the master of perfection, the care of communicating his gifts to him, in such time and manner as he shall please: but it is true, that he seldom communicates them to any but to mortified souls: and if he bestows any share of them on those who are not so, 'tis only to induce them to the love of mortification and the cross. As several authors have treated of this matter, I shall only speak here, of what is necessary for reaping some profit from the consideration of the sufferings of Christ.

V. Mortification chiefly consists in an entire and constant resignation of one's self, and of all exterior, interior, and celestial goods into the hands of God, without any voluntary reservation. This is easy to be said, and agreeable to be heard, but infinitely difficult to be practised, because of the extreme opposition of nature thereto. It is this combat of which St. Paul speaks, (*Gal. v. 17.*) *of the flesh against the spirit, and of the spirit against the flesh*: the flesh would be at liberty, and the spirit would bring it into subjection to itself, and to the will of God. This victory is the end which the spiritual man proposes to himself, in all his exercises of piety; that he may become a pliable instrument in the hands of God, who never fails to bestow his blessings plentifully on those souls, wherein he finds such happy dispositions. For the more free, disengaged from passions, submissive and resigned to the will of God the spirit is, the more purely divine love operates therein; and in proportion also as love is purified, resignation becomes perfect: these two virtues go hand in hand, as one may say, and assist one another; resignation augments love, and love perfects resignation.

This entire resignation to the order of God being therefore the foundation of sanctity, and the most perfect preparation to the gifts of the Holy Ghost; we must not wonder if the devil and corrupt nature endeavour so much to destroy it; and if it is opposed by all manner of temptations. It is for this reason that God, who knows all our evils and their remedies, has so wisely ordained, that the cross and sufferings should be the way to heaven. For on the one hand, the sense of pain taking from man the relish of pleasures, disengages him by degrees from the earth; and on the other, the experience of his own misery, obliges him to have recourse to God. Thus the cross produces at the same time these two most wholesome effects:

effects; it breaks the chains which link us to the world, and brings us to Christ.

VI. God has established true wisdom in the cross: out of this way there is nothing but labyrinths and precipices. He was pleased that the cross should be a certain proof of his love, that his most intimate friends should have the largest share thereof, and that they should place their delight therein, in consideration of his love; he has exempted none from it, not even those in whom he has found the greatest purity and innocence: and the blessed Virgin, the purest of all creatures, was also the most afflicted therewith.

One cannot imagine, without having experienced it, what those saints suffer who appear the fullest of the love of God, and the most prevented with the blessings of his sweetness: the fervour of their charity becomes to them an inexhaustible source of crosses, the weight of which increases daily in proportion to their love. Christ was pleased to subject himself to this law, and to manifest to us how much he loved us, by shewing us with his blood the way we were to follow. For since the moment of his becoming man for us, as he found no time nor place but what was proper for loving; so neither did he find any but what was proper for suffering: his mother's womb, his infancy, or his youth, were not exempted from it; and it may be said, that from the first moment of his life, until his death, he was continually upon the cross.

VII. Since this means is so necessary for obtaining true wisdom, and the pure love of God; and that on the other hand, nature having so great a reluctance thereto; nothing undoubtedly is more profitable to the soul, to assist it in carrying the burthen of its cross, and subjecting itself to God in all things, than the continual remembrance of Christ's sufferings: for they make us comprehend what our Lord has done for us, how much he deserves our love, and with what confidence we may cast ourselves into the arms of so charitable a father. If his love induced him even to sacrifice himself for our salvation, will he forget any thing that can render us happy, when we resign ourselves to him without reservation? This resignation produces, in all the accidents of life, an unalterable peace and tranquility of mind; because the consideration of the sufferings and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, makes us receive from his hand, the greatest afflictions whatever that befall us. From whence arises also an entire confidence in his mercy,
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with respect to what is past, present, and to come ; with an equal diffidence of ourselves, when we come to consider that our wounds were so great, that the sufferings and death of a God were necessary to heal them. This consideration inspires us with a saving horror of ourselves and our sins, and shews us clearly the depth of our misery, which renders us capable of falling by our own weakness into the greatest crimes, and incapable of rising again without the help of the sufferings of a Saviour.

VIII. All these considerations excite in us an ardent love for his divine person ; but a love that is efficacious and urges us to become like him, to repair the time we have spent without loving and imitating him, and to run incessantly after the odour of the perfumes of Jesus suffering and crucified.

The love of Christ and the desire of imitating him, produce another very considerable advantage, which may be regarded as one of the foundations of a spiritual life ; and which is a sweet facility to virtuous actions. For though the soul is not always in a state of practising them, it has by this love the actual relish of all virtues, and is always disposed to perform acts thereof, when the occasion presents itself. This is perhaps what the holy fathers mean, when they affirm that *all virtues are practised in prayer* : (S. Chrys. l. 2. *de orand. Deo.*) which cannot be understood of every virtue in particular, whose matter is not always found in prayer ; but because a person practises the love of God therein, which produces in the soul the same effect as the frequent use of the other virtues would do, by giving him a facility and inclination to the exercise of them, which the doctors call habit. This makes St. Paul say, (1 Cor. xiii. 4, 7.) that *charity is patient, is benign* : that it *believes all things, hopes all things, bears all things* : because it urges us to please Jesus Christ, and to do every thing which can render us like him.

The mind of man cannot comprehend what treasures of graces flow from these three sources, which the consideration of the sufferings of Christ produces in us, which are, the love of our Saviour, the imitation of his virtues, and the resignation of ourselves into the hands of God. Those souls that faithfully persevere in his holy exercise, ought to be content with being filled with *honey from the rock*, and with drinking large draughts of that sweet liquor which runs out of our Saviour's wounds. His cross is a frightful aspect to the eyes of worldlings ;

worldlings; but yet it is the source of life, the way of salvation, and as it were the ladder by which we ascend to the highest perfection.

Thus in order to reap advantage from the meditation of the sufferings of Christ, we must enter upon the same with a design of inflaming our hearts with the fire of his love, of resigning ourselves entirely to him, and of imitating him with a perfect fidelity: having always before our eyes, that as in heaven, *we shall be like God; because we shall see him as he is: (1 John iii. 2.)* so we shall also become like Jesus Christ, when we behold him often such as he is upon his cross. *He that says he abides in him, even as he has walked, so ought he himself also to walk. (1 Jo. ii. 6.)* Now he walked in such a manner, that he became very like us in our misery; we ought therefore out of gratitude and love, chiefly to employ ourselves in becoming like him in his sufferings. For if we only regard spiritual things as an ordinary occupation, wherein we are willing to employ some short time, the other actions of life will be performed without fruit, and the omission of the exercises of piety will pass for a small loss; but if we consider them as the most important affair we have in the world, as the end for which God has placed us therein, and the principle of our eternal happiness, they will produce in us admirable fruits of virtue and sanctity.

This is what S. Cyprian has so well expressed in few words. *If you are sufficient for God, why is not God sufficient for you? (Serm. I. de ascens.)* That is, if you were the principal end which Jesus Christ proposed to himself, and the cause of his labours and mortal life; is it not reasonable that he should be also the end of your actions, and the principle of your life? Let us remember that when Christ became man, the first motion of his heart was a loving resignation to the will of his father; that he accepted, with a voluntary submission, whatever was requisite to be suffered for our salvation; that his first words were, as St. Luke relates (ii. 49.) *that I must be employed about those things which are my father's*; and that the last which he pronounced at his death, were these; *father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. (Luke xxiii. 46.)* So that our Saviour's conduct was always uniform; he began his life by loving, obeying, and suffering; and he continued and finished it in the same manner; and it is for this reason, that his true friends account all that time of life as lost, which they have not employed in loving and imitating him.

C H A P. II.

How to profit by the consideration and reading of the sufferings of Christ.

IT is certain that God liberally communicates motives, sentiments, and interior motions to those who desire to be his servants, whereby he inflames and dilates their hearts, in order to induce them to walk in his ways with greater confidence and ease : he enlightens their understandings with heavenly truths, inflames their wills with his love, and sometimes teaches them more in one moment by the unction of his spirit, than all the masters and books in the world could do in many years. Nevertheless it is according to order, and the advice of the saints, that those persons who begin, and even those who are already advanced, when that divine sun hides himself behind any cloud, should have recourse to instruction, reading, and preparation ; these means commonly render the mind more attentive and recollected, fill the memory with good thoughts, awake the will, soften the hardness and dryness of the soul, and conduct it into the ways of prayer with more safety : for want of this precaution persons often fall into a dangerous laziness and drought ; because they are not instructed in what manner they ought at that time to treat with God, they go to prayer with difficulty, they depart from it with disgust, and at last they leave it off altogether.

II. It is therefore not only profitable, but necessary for beginners to have a director, to prescribe them the subjects and manner wherein they ought to employ themselves in prayer ; or that knows how to conduct them, according to their several gifts and talents, in the way whereby God draws them to himself. For though they all propose to themselves the same end, which is to be united to God by love, to become like him by imitation, and to submit themselves entirely to him by the spirit of resignation and mortification ; he nevertheless makes use of a multitude of different ways for conducting them to the same limits : some go thither by the hatred of themselves and of their sins ; others by the sweet attraction of his presence ; some by the transport of his love, and the desire of possessing him ; and all these several ways make us admire the greatness of God, and the infinite treasures of his wisdom.

He who is so happy as to find a prudent and learned director, reaps much profit in a short time, when he is faithful in obedience; as it appears in those religious houses, which are well regulated, wherein the novices are educated by spiritual and experienced masters, who follow them close, prescribe them whatever they are to do every day, and lead them as it were step by step in the way which God opens them, till they can walk without a guide; and till, being well established in the exercise of mortification, and interior familiarity with God, they become men truly spiritual.

There may indeed be met with persons considerable for their doctrine, and natural qualities, in religious orders, where the use of mortification is neglected; but there are not many fervent religious found therein: so that superiors who take little pains about the education of novices; and masters of novices, whose application goes no further than exterior things, are properly they who relax regular discipline; because not affording those souls, whom God has placed under their conduct, the nourishment of the interior life, the whole order loses by degrees the vigour that supports it, and falls at last into a deplorable remissness.

III. As to those who live in the world, they may assist themselves in their conduct by the reading of pious books, and by the direction of a prudent confessor, or some other servant of God, to whom they discover their conscience; and above all by the frequent use of the sacraments, which is the most efficacious means for obtaining interior light from God; and if any one will make use of this book, it is proper that he should know the order which is observed therein.

First, the mystery of each of our Saviour's sufferings is laid open, with an instruction proper to excite a desire of imitating it; afterwards is set down, by way of exercise or affection, the use that may be made thereof, and the fruit that may be drawn from thence: every one may use the same when the Lord speaks not; for when he pleases to let his voice be heard, we must apply ourselves only to hear him in an humble silence.

Each exercise contains three principal points: humiliation, caused by the knowledge of our own misery; oblation and resignation of ourselves into the hands of God; and a desire of imitating Jesus Christ, and of being like him. These three things, which we ought always to have in view, in all our actions and exercises, are mingled with aspirations and sentiments

ments of love. We have also joined thereto, adorations, petitions, and thanksgiveings, that nothing may be omitted that can kindle in the heart of man, a love of the divine beauty and goodness. But that the mind may act with more freedom, and enter with more ease, into those affections to which it finds itself moved, we have not thought proper to subject it to any particular order.

IV. In order to reap more profit from this work, it will be good to observe the following instructions.

1. He who would be a true servant of God, must before all things endeavour to discover his predominant passion, and the faults to which he is most subject; that he may fight against them by prayer, and the practice of contrary virtues; especially let him beg continually the love of God and humility; because these two virtues purify the soul from whatever is displeasing to God.

2. Let him apply himself to the knowledge and accomplishment of the duties of his state; being fully persuaded that God absolutely requires that of him; and let him establish his devotion and exercises upon that foundation. For as St. Bernard says (*Serm. Ecce nos reliquimus*) the offerings of supererogation are not pleasing to God, when we perform not those which are of obligation. Now those are called obligations or duties of one's state, which the law of God exacts of every man in his own condition, of a religious, of an ecclesiastic, of a magistrate, of a judge, of a married man, of a master of a family, &c. and if any doubt arises concerning this matter, we must consult persons learned and fearing God, who decide not to please men, but with a view only of God's service, and the salvation of those who consult them.

3. After having settled his conscience by a general confession, and discharged the obligations which are consequent thereto, let him regulate his designs, occupations, and exercises with relation to a spiritual life, as to the principal end which he ought to propose to himself. Now it is one of the miracles of divine grace and wisdom, that every state of a lawful life, that is, which is not reprov'd by the law of God, may be referred to the end of which we speak: and experience daily shews, that the actions which we perform for discharging the duties of our state, though they seem sometimes very distracting of themselves, bring us nearer to God, than they remove us from him; that they augment the desire of his presence,

presence, and that he communicates himself to the soul in such a manner by secret and unknown ways, in the midst of necessary distractions, that it is never delayed thereby.

4. Let him seek the glory of God in all things, and not content himself with avoiding sin, but aim at, and advance in, what is most perfect within the bounds of his condition; let him compare his desires with those which Jesus Christ would have had on the like occasion; which may easily be known by his doctrine and examples: this is a sure means of advancing greatly in his imitation, and consequently in sanctity.

5. Let all his actions be regulated in such a manner, that he may be always employed, and know what he is to do in every hour of the day; by this means he will live in greater innocence, and be less exposed to the temptations of the devil. Let him not begin any action or exercise without an elevation of his heart to God, to beg his light and grace, that he may do nothing but what is for his glory, and according to his good pleasure.

6. Let him receive every affliction or pleasure that befalls him, with an entire conformity to the divine will, praising God and blessing him without intermission, in spite of the repugnances of nature; let him entreat him not to regard the corrupt sentiments of human weakness, but the good desires, with which his bounty has vouchsafed to inspire him; and let him remain in the calmest disposition he possibly can, till the storm be entirely ceased.

7. If he receives from God any particular graces, let him discover them only to those who direct him, to whom he ought sincerely to disclose the bottom of his soul, that he may avoid all mistake, and not fall into the snares of the devil.

8. There are many sorts of temptation, some induce us to sin, others withdraw us from perfection. This is a general precaution in regard of all.

First, to be diffident of those things for which we feel a strong inclination, how good soever they may seem to us; because every thing, except God alone, that we ardently seek after, and forsake with difficulty, is the object of disorderly love, and becomes a source of temptations, and a hindrance to the perfect knowledge and pure love of God, which ought to be the aim of all our desires,

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Secondly, not to allow any thought to enter into our mind which might disturb us, but to resist it in the beginning, by imploring the help of God: if it becomes too importunate, we must have recourse to our ghostly father, to the use of the sacraments, to the intercession of the blessed virgin and saints, and to the avoiding of all occasions which might make us lose our interior peace; for the strongest often yield thereto; whereas the weak find in their flight, strength and victory. The temptations of the flesh and pride are the most dangerous, because they more directly attack the life of the soul; but we must be persuaded that they never hurt whilst they displease; that we are not forsaken of God, though we are not sensible of his help; and that to leave off our exercises of piety at that time, would be basely yielding to the temptation.

Thus, very far from shunning the physician and the remedy when we are sick, it is particularly at that time that we must cast ourselves at the Lord's feet, with a firm confidence, that he will not only have the goodness to help us, but that his wisdom and love will turn all the punishments we suffer to our advantage.

What we have said concerning the regularity of life, the purity of desires, and the resistance of temptations, ought to be a great consolation to persons given to prayer, by giving them that confidence with which they must approach to God, and interior peace so necessary for treating with him. I say still more, that though we should find ourselves so oppressed with the remorse of any sin newly committed, that we should not dare, out of a just shame, to appear before God, we ought not even then to keep at a distance from him; but to present ourselves before his mercy covered with confusion, to acknowledge the greatness of our evil, and humbly to protest to God, that we know no other remedy after having offended him, than to have recourse to him: for that which appears a respectful fear, is only in effect a secret pride, which cannot bear the shame and humiliation of sin.

9. Let him not depend, for the accomplishment of his resolutions, either on his own merits, or industry; but only perform what belongs to him, in preparation of himself for what it shall please God to communicate to him: and let him think he does no small matter, if he faithfully perseveres in this disposition, by daily renewing his good desires. Let him be assured that the work of God will be always done, in such a manner as is most agreeable to his glory, and the good
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of his soul: but let him not appoint himself the judge of his own advancement, nor of the communications of God, who, by a conduct full of wisdom, often hides from us what he operates in us, even when he operates what we desire; for he requires us to live in confidence and resignation, to continue knocking at the gate of his mercy, and to be always sensible of our own poverty and misery.

10. Let him therefore never leave off his prayer, what dryness soever he suffers therein; but endeavour on the contrary to persevere constantly in it: for though it be without relish, it is not without fruit; and it is always profitable, though we are not always sensible of its advantage. But when it pleases God to soften our hearts by the sentiment of his love, we must be attentive to its operation, and not carry our thoughts elsewhere, so long as there remains one single spark of this divine fire: for this spark perhaps will cause a great conflagration, which will produce in the soul the change it desires.

11. Let him be careful to elevate his mind to God often in the day, by resigning himself to him, blessing his holy name, thanking him for his favours, imploring his help, speaking to him affectionately, embracing him lovingly, and sighing after the possession of him; that he may perpetually entertain the fire of divine love. For it frequently happens that God grants at those moments, what he refuses in the time of prayer; to teach us that it is to his goodness, and not to our own care, that we owe our happiness: which will also serve to augment our love to him, and to diminish our pride.

12. Let him be fully persuaded of these two things; the one which will be a great help to him in his punishments and temptations, that God proportions them always to our strength, and never leaves more upon us than we can bear with the assistance of his grace. For as a holy Solitary very wisely observes, (St. *Isaac*) although we always feel the temptation before grace, yet it is certain that grace always precedes the temptation; since God never permits temptation but according to the measure of grace; which ought to inspire us with great courage and confidence. The other, is the remembrance of God's presence, especially in such occasions as are capable of distracting us, wherein we must observe, as much as possible, a respectful attention to God who sees us and acts with us; by this means the door of divine communications will not be shut, and we shall always be in a state of being introduced, whenever it shall please the Lord, into the
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cellar of his delicious wines, (Cant. II. 2.) where he pours out the torrents of his love, where he dispels the clouds which hide him from us, where he communicates himself familiarly to the soul, where far from the noise of human words, and in the silence of universal nature, he speaks to us himself heart to heart, and where he sleeps and rests in peace with us. (Ps. iv. 9.) O! who could behold that happy moment? Grant us this grace, O Lord! if it be for thy glory, and the advancement of thy service.

C H A P. III.

The method of meditating on the sufferings of Christ in prayer.

HE who would apply himself to this exercise, ought, when the hour of prayer is come, to behold with the eye of faith God present in the bottom of his heart, and more intimate to the soul than it is to itself; or above him, by considering himself at his feet as a miserable creature: he may also regard himself plunged in the immensity of God, as a fish in the sea; or encompassed on every side with his goodness, as a man would be with the light of the sun at mid-day in an open place. Let him chuse of these considerations that which will inspire him most with respect, attention, faith, confidence, and union with God; and be assured that his goodness will hear him favourably, and assist him in all his necessities: let him afterwards cast his eyes upon the mystery he proposes to meditate on; not looking upon it as past, but as present, since it is so indeed in the idea of God; but if the action of the mystery be past, the virtue of it is not so, nor the love wherewith Christ performed it; for that love is infinite, immutable, always the same, as ardent as when he shed his blood, and gave his life for our salvation, and most ready to do it still, if it were necessary.

II. Thus after having recollected all his senses interior and exterior, adored God with profound respect, made the sign of the cross, said the Lord's prayer and angelical salutation, in order to obtain the light of heaven; let him begin
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this exercise by reading attentively that suffering of our Saviour which he is to meditate upon, stopping his reading at such places where he finds himself touched, that he may hear God, and let him act in him; and afterwards continue his reading: when it is finished, let him address himself to our Saviour, as if he beheld him with his eyes in that state of suffering, which is the subject of his prayer; and let him declare his love to him by affectionate words, or only by the motions of his heart, according as God shall inspire him: for we must always faithfully follow the impressions he gives us: and since it is he whom we seek, we shall remain at ease when we have found him.

Let the understanding act as little as possible; for besides having but little light whilst the soul is inclosed in this mortal body, it ought only to serve for preparing the way for the will, and opening, as one may say, the gate to love. Now if God vouchsafes through his mercy, without the help of the understanding and imagination, to fill our souls with a sweet peace, or with the admiration of those truths which faith discovers to us; or with a lively sorrow at the sight of our sins, and the suffering of our Saviour; or with regret for having begun so late to love him; or with a desire of being entirely his; or with a transport of love which may induce us to embrace him affectionately; or in fine with any other motion whatsoever that may unite us to God; we must remain calmly therein, without employing ourselves with any other thought, how holy soever it may appear to us: not that other thoughts are bad; but because the soul finds in this interior peace, the fruit and end of all good thoughts.

The mind of man is too closely confined in this life to think on many things at once. It is a disorder to sow when we ought to reap, and a temptation to desire to fill ourselves with holy thoughts when we should gather the fruit thereof:—let the soul therefore enjoy the fruit of its past labours, and take its rest; as a sheep does that is filled, which without troubling itself with seeking for fresh grass, that his stomach perhaps could not digest, sweetly chews over again what it has already eaten. A day will come when being discharged from the weight of this earthly body, it will find itself equally possessed of knowledge and love, and not the one be any impediment to the other.

III. The time of prayer being ended, retire from it with a disposition of peace and love, as one that possesses God within

within himself: apply yourself afterwards to the affairs of your state with a recollected mind, and endeavour to preserve the fervour, light, and repose of prayer. But if it has been accompanied with dryness, heaviness, and other pains, be not grieved thereat; but in concluding it, bless the Lord who is always just in judgments, acknowledge your own unworthiness, offer him your troubles, protesting that you did not undertake this exercise, for receiving the consolations of God therein, but for the doing his holy will, to which you entirely resign yourself. Examine in fine what may have distracted you: if you had been the cause of it yourself, by your own fault or negligence, before or in time of prayer, accuse yourself thereof with sorrow, and punish yourself for it by saying some prayer in the spirit of satisfaction: by this means it will happen, that going from prayer, humbled and confounded, you will reap no less fruit from thence, than if you had been filled with consolation therein. God who takes more care of our spiritual advancement than we ourselves, knows also much better than we, what is most convenient for us. Therefore we ought to carry to prayer an entire resignation of ourselves into his hands, and a sincere desire of serving him; not agreeably to our own liking, but according to his good pleasure; equally thanking him, whether he humbles or comforts us; since both equally proceed from a father full of affection and goodness towards us.

IV. But that we may have our minds more recollected, and consequently better disposed to treat with God, it is of great importance to give him the first fruits of our thoughts in the morning, by elevating our hearts to him at our being awake; to have certain appointed times also in the day for doing it, by frequent aspirations; and in fine to lay ourselves down to sleep at night in his presence and at his feet. For it is very difficult for him, who lets his mind be distracted in other actions, to find recollection in prayer. As purity of heart is also a necessary disposition to the divine communications; and as a rigorous examination of our faults may greatly contribute thereto; I shall here prescribe the method of doing it every day.

C H A P. IV.

Of Examination.

IN a spiritual life there are certain important maxims, which he who would make any progress in must observe in his conduct. Some are general, and regard all times, places, and persons. Others are particular, and annexed to certain circumstances. The general ones are these:

1. To be continually on our guard, that we be not willingly possessed with any object, desire, or thought, which may be displeasing to God.

2. To be frequently mindful of his presence, that we may adore and bless him with a profound respect.

3. Not to commit any fault, whether interior or exterior, without immediately conceiving sorrow, and begging pardon for it.

4. Never to take any resolution till having first consulted God; that we may do nothing but what is conformable to his will.

5. To be watchful in mortifying our senses, and particularly our tongue, that nothing may escape them but what is regular and just.

6. To do our neighbour, whoever he be, all the good we can: and so to enlarge our hearts towards him, that the power of assisting him may be wanting always rather than the will.

7. Never to harbour any hatred or bitterness, how small soever it be, and though of ever so short a duration.

8. Never to suffer any sin on our conscience, particularly if it is considerable, without bewailing it, and having speedy recourse to the sacrament of penance.

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9. Never to neglect our exercises of piety, nor the inspirations of God; and faithfully to pursue those motions he inspires us with.

10. To be distrustful of those things for which we feel a strong inclination, whether they be good or bad; and to have always the fear of God before our eyes.

11. Not to be attached to our own will, but to condescend to that of others, when it may be done without sin.

12. Not to have any esteem of ourselves, and to do nothing for gaining that of men; to propose to ourselves only God's glory, and never to prefer ourselves to any one, how imperfect soever he may appear to us.

13. To bless God in all the accidents of life, and to receive them from his hands with thanksgiving.

II. Besides these general instructions, there are some particular ones which regard, 1. The duties of every person in his own state of life. 2. The amendment of his common failings. 3. The attention which he ought to have to those occasions which might assist or impede his spiritual advancement. 4. The regulation of his time and actions. 5. The manner in which he ought to act and converse with his neighbour. For he that would please God, ought always to have in view, the advancement in his love, the avoiding of sin, the profiting by every thing that happens, and the renewing, changing, augmenting, and diminishing his resolutions, according to the circumstances which offer themselves. For, as it is very well observed in the book of *the contempt of the world*, our advancement is such as our resolutions are. It is necessary therefore to neglect nothing in such an important affair, and to examine ourselves strictly with regard to all these things.

III. Let him then who desires to acquire the purity of heart, after having made the sign of the cross, and said the Lord's prayer, present himself in presence of God, as a prodigal child that returns to his father; or as the publican, who dares not to lift up his eyes to heaven; or as holy *Magdalen*, bewailing her sins at her Saviour's feet; or as the leper, begging his cure of him at a distance; or as the wicked servant, being prostrate before his master, and not having wherewith

to satisfy him, has recourse to his patience and goodness; or in fine as a miserable creature, who overwhelmed with the weight of his miseries stands in great need of the mercy of his creator. Let him afterwards make a sincere acknowledgment of all his sins in particular, and beg pardon for them with sorrow and humility: let him compare his faults with his resolutions, bless the patience of God for his long-sufferance of him, and lastly conclude his examen by this, or some such like prayer.

IV. Behold here, O my Lord and my God! this miserable creature. Behold him whom thou supportest with so much goodness, and for whom thou hast done such great things: this unprofitable, weak, and ungrateful servant, rebellious to thy light, and faithless in thy service; who has done so much ill, and so little good. What will become of me? O Lord! if thou hast not mercy on me? Thou without whom I am nothing, I know nothing, I can do nothing but sin, and not reclaim myself; fall, and not rise again; go astray, and not return into the road; lose thee, and not seek thee; offend thee, and not appease thy wrath, unless I am assisted with thy light and grace. Thou knowest that all comes from thee, the will, the desire, and the execution. Thou art the refuge of the poor, and the comfort of the miserable. Behold here a poor and miserable sinner, who casts himself into the arms of thy mercy. Look upon me, O Lord! with the eyes of thy goodness; forget my sins, compassionate my miseries, and moisten the dryness of my heart with the salutary waters of thy grace. O divine light, dispel my darkness! O infinite power, fortify my weakness! receive my desire, O Lord! assist my will, forget what I have committed against thee, and give me what thou hast merited for me. Such as I am, I desire to be wholly thine; supply my unworthiness by thy grace; let that same goodness, which inspires me with the desire and resolution of serving thee, oblige thee to operate in me what thou desirest from me, that I may never do any thing but to thy glory. *Amen.*

V. After having spoken to God in this manner, let him implore the assistance of the blessed virgin, his angel guardian, and his patrons; and then conclude with the desire of being faithful to God, and of performing his resolutions. But when God, by a ray of his light, discovers to the soul the great purity he requires of it, he gives it also a clearer knowledge of its defects, urges it to examine them more strictly, and to search for its most secret inclinations, not only the vicious but

but natural ones. Would to God that finners would bewail their greatest crimes, with as much sorrow as that soul then bewails its smallest faults! As such a soul dwells in a region of light, I do not write this for it, but only for beginners.

C H A P. V.

Considerations proper for exciting in us the love of Christ suffering.

AMONG an infinite number of motives, capable of kindling in our hearts the love of Christ, in consideration of his sufferings; and of shewing us the obligation we have of imitating him; we shall only set down some of them here, hoping that God will be pleased to suggest others to those, who shall come, according to the expression of the prophet *Isaiah*, to draw waters in joy from the fountains of our Saviour, (xii. 3.)

I. He suffered willingly, and out of the pure love he had for us; without being obliged thereto either in rigour of justice, or by reason of our merits: for on the one hand we are all sinners; and on the other, though he was engaged to suffer by his promise and obedience, both having been voluntary, yet his sacrifice was not so much a sacrifice of justice, as of love. (*Psalms* iv. 6.)

II. He suffered joyfully: for though the scripture compares his torments to the waves of a raging sea, he was urged with an earnest desire of undergoing them; and it is in this view the prophet *Jeremy* foretold of him, that *he should be filled with reproaches.* (*Lament.* iii. 30.) This is a most bitter food, and very hard to digest; but it was so palatable to Christ, that he required a great deal of it to satisfy his hunger: that hunger which was the measure of his sufferings, ought also to be that of our love.

III. That desire of suffering excited by love, sweetened to him the bitterest things. Thus it was sweet to him to be subject to his parents, during so great a number of years; to
live

live among men, whose manners were so different from his own; to be tempted by the devil; and to subject himself to many other most humbling and grievous punishments; of which we are to speak at large; and in which his love made him find incredible delights.

IV. He wrought in himself a continual miracle, that he might be able to suffer: for beholding God clearly, and consequently enjoying happiness, he refused his body the glorious qualities of brightness, agility, subtilty and impassibility, which the soul should naturally have communicated to it: and that love which made him so often work miracles, for freeing the martyrs from the sense of pain, made him work some, that he himself might become capable of suffering and dying for us.

V. He has transferred to and made us a perfect donation of whatever he merited by his sufferings; as he himself was already happy, he had no need of merits but for his exterior glory, which he miraculously suspended in the manner we have mentioned, and which he prevented from being outwardly resplendent. Thus he merited all the rest for us; that is to say, the pardon of, and satisfaction for, sin; grace and glory; but in such abundance, that tho' one single sigh of his, could have merited for all men the means and possession of eternal salvation, by the infinite value which the dignity of his person gave to the least of his actions; yet he was pleased, in satisfaction of his love, to suffer the most dreadful torments: and this was the foundation of that superabundant redemption, and inexhaustible treasure of graces, which he still distributes daily to us, with the same goodness, as if he had but just merited them for us.

VI. His love had no beginning, and will never have an end: for though it appeared only in time by the works which God performed exteriorly, it burnt from all eternity in his heart; and as it is eternal and infinite, it is incapable of any change: for Christ loves us with his whole essence, and with the same love which unites the three divine persons together. As there is but one essence in God, there cannot be a plurality of loves in him: therefore he loves his creatures with the same love with which he loves himself, every one in proportion to its merits; and he has done no less for me than he would have done for himself, if he had been in the same necessity as I am.

VII. This

VII. This love is neither divided, nor capable of division. God loves me with the same love wherewith he loves all men; he has suffered no less for me alone than for them; and he belongs as much to me as he does to all others together. So that I may say with St. *Bernard*, thou art wholly mine, O my amiable Jesus! and wholly sacrificed to my necessities. I may call him, with the apostle St. *Thomas*, my Lord and my God; as if there was no other soul in the world but mine for which he died. And though he communicates himself to men in proportion to the dispositions he finds in them, because he will not do violence to their liberty, yet it is certain that, by his own inclination, he is always ready to do each of them in particular as much good, and even more, than to all the others together; as he did to the most blessed virgin his mother: for, according to the observation of St. *Chrysostom* (*Hom. 20. in Matt.*) it is always the fault of him that asks when he receives little. It cannot be doubted but that God's goodness is infinite; therefore the smallness of his gift proceeds not from his little love, but from our want of disposition. If God bestows a small blessing on his creature, it is not because of the little love he has for it, but of the smallness of his love to him. When he suffered I was present to his knowledge, which is no less infinite than his love; and he offered his sufferings to his eternal father for all my necessities in particular, as if he had suffered only for me alone.

VIII. In order to resemble me the more, he had no regard to himself: he concealed all the splendor and majesty of his divine person, that he might subject himself to all those humiliations, which he could suffer without sin. He passed for a sinner, was treated as a slave, and made no account of his own life, though it was the most precious thing in the world, further than it might serve for my salvation. He permitted his soul, which was happy and incapable of suffering, to be chased by the violence of torments out of a body which had always been perfectly subject to it, and to which it naturally desired to remain united. He was pleased that his divinity, which could not suffer of itself, should concur at least in all his labours and suffering after a particular manner. In a word, he was not satisfied till his body, soul, and divinity, were become my nourishment; and he has set so high a value upon me, though a miserable wretch as I am, that he has given me all he had to bestow, and suffered for me whatever he could.

IX. Many

IX. Many of his pains were to such a degree of violence, that he could never have supported them without dying, if he had been a mere man; such was his fast forty days in the desert, his sorrow in the garden of *Olives*, which *St. Luke* calls an agony, and which was indeed a mortal accident: but because it was not fit that he should destroy himself, he sustained his humanity by the divine power, in order to make it suffer more than the weakness of nature could bear. In the same manner also he used his body during his passion: for though such violent pains ought naturally to have deprived him of life, he preserved it by the power of his divinity, until he had filled up the measure of those punishments he had resolved to suffer for us. So he concealed at the same time the splendor of his divinity, that he might not be spared in his sufferings; and he excited its power, to add to the humanity the strength of suffering the more.

X. In fine, what infinitely exalts the greatness of his charity, as the apostle *St. Paul* says, (*Rom. v.*) is the unworthiness of those whom he loved. It is not perhaps above the mind of man to comprehend, that one might give his life for a just man: because he who, by an unjust condemnation, suffers death for an innocent person, augments thereby his own merit and glory, very far from losing any part of either; but to die for a wicked, criminal, ungrateful person, one who perpetually offends his own benefactor, and even makes use of the favours he has received from him to his dishonour; this is what surpasses human understanding, and what the love of God alone is capable of comprehending and executing. For when we were enemies to God, the eternal father delivered up his only son to death for us; the son offered himself joyfully thereto; and the Holy Ghost, that divine fire, kindled in the father and son that infinite charity by which we are loved, in spite of our unworthiness and demerits. God does not regulate the love he bears us according to our merits, but to his own goodness; and the more unworthy we are of it, the greater, more pure, and worthy of him is his love. It is your duty, O christian soul! to consider what you owe to God for all his favours.

THE
S U F F E R I N G S
OF OUR

LORD JESUS CHRIST,

DURING HIS HIDDEN LIFE.

I. Suffering of CHRIST.

His foresight and acceptance of whatever he was to suffer.

OUR Lord made use of such efficacious remedies for restoring human nature, corrupted by the sin of the first man, and so proper for the cure of our wounds, that it may be truly said, he has redeemed us after the most perfect manner. For besides our being born and living in sin, and subject to all the punishments it has brought upon us; it also caused in our nature so great a disorder, and such a violent inclination to evil, that Christ was no less necessary for the re-establishment of order, than for the expiation of our sins; and we equally stood in need of reformation and redemption. It was for this reason that the son of God, having vouchsafed by his infinite mercy to redeem the world, was not satisfied with meriting for us the remedy of our evils, by every action of this mortal life; but he has left us the example and form of all those virtues, that are to serve for the regulation of our manners: which makes St. Paul say, (1 Cor. xv. 49.) that as by the sins in which we are born, and wherein we live, *we have borne the image of the earthly Adam*, so we ought to endeavour to bear also the image of the heavenly one, by a life altogether new; especially since we are become one and the same body with him by the grace of baptism: and the same apostle

I. *Suffering of Christ.*

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apostle advises us also, (*Rom. xii. 14.*) to put on our Lord Jesus Christ; and to live as having been redeemed by his blood, and instructed by his example.

II. Jesus Christ, our Saviour and master both, has observed in the reformation of man, the same order which had been pursued in his destruction; but he has practised therein the virtues directly opposite to those vices which had destroyed us. For first, in place of *Eve*, he made choice of the blessed virgin *Mary*, as a companion of his labour, endued with an angelic purity of soul and body, perfectly subject to God, and the instrument of all our evil. Secondly, *Adam* was created with great advantages of nature, and most plentiful helps of grace, whereby it was easy for him to have continued in that happy state: and notwithstanding he sinned almost immediately after his creation. The second *Adam*, in order to repair the fault of the first, was pleased that his body should be formed, and his soul and divinity united thereto, in an instant; being unable to wait the ordinary term of man's formation, thro' his impatience of beginning the work of our redemption.

III. As disobedience had been the first sin, the first action of Christ was an act of obedience. A perverse will, and a pleasure delighted in, contrary to the prohibition of the creator, were the origin of our ruin: the sense of pain suffered in submission to the order of God, was the beginning of our reparation. So that our Saviour in descending on earth was united to our nature; and at the instant of his conception, in which he might have been truly adored as Man-God, he began his first labour and our first remedy. He could not suffer the least delay, nor that there should be one sole moment in his life but what was full of mercy and grace for sinners. The eternal father represented to him at the first instant of his life, the labours, troubles, ignominies, sorrows, derelictions, torments, death, and in fine all the torments he had to suffer, with all their circumstances, their weight, number, and measure; but in so lively and distinct a manner, as when he had actually endured them. Besides our Lord, who was full of light and grace, from whom nothing could be hid, and who beheld all these things as if they had been present, submitted himself joyfully and entirely to his father's command; and accepted of every thing that was ordained for him to suffer from his conception till his death, with a will as ready and compleat, as if nothing had been proposed to him but glory and pleasures.

IV. But as, by all the actions of his life, he put in execution every particular of the will of God his father, how severe soever they were to nature; so we ought to believe, that he was not content with accepting in general of every thing he was to suffer; but that he then resigned and delivered up in particular his head to thorns, his eyes to tears, his cheeks to buffetings, his face to affronts, and his mouth to gall and vinegar; and that he offered his body, life, honour, and what was in him capable of suffering, for the glory of his father, and the salvation of men. This was a most sensible pain to his sacred humanity, which was then so tender and delicate: for as our Lord never spared it in the smallest matter that might afflict it, it cannot be doubted but that this representation was most grievous to it; because his infinite knowledge supplied what it wanted of the experimental part; and though this sense made a greater appearance exteriorly in his prayer in the garden; yet it may be said, that it was not more violent than in that first moment of which we speak.

V. This voluntary obedience of the word incarnate, was accompanied with a profound humility, and ardent love, an extreme sorrow, and an infinite merit; it was so agreeable to God that it was sufficient for the redemption of all men; and that the eternal father could then have revoked the sentence and command which he had given to his son, taken him up to heaven, and made him sit down at his right hand: for the merit of that single action was capable of taking away all the sins of the world, of chaining down the powers of hell, of filling the whole world with treasures of grace, and opening to all men the gates of heaven: because Christ being a divine and infinite person, and the value of actions corresponding always to the merit of the person, the least of his was more than sufficient for redeeming a hundred thousand worlds. This is what *Isaiah* foretold of him in these words; (viii. 3.) *Call his name, hasten to take away the spoils, make haste to take preys: for before the child knows how to call for his father and mother, the strength of Damascus shall be taken away*, that is, the power of the devil and sin, to which the whole world were slaves. The prophet foresaw that the *Messias* would not delay our remedy one moment, and that he would be so impatient to accomplish his father's designs, that in the first instant of his life, he would abundantly merit for us, by his obedience, all the favours of the divine mercy, not only before he could speak, but even before he was born. Such was the charity which drew down Christ on earth: one single action of his was sufficient

cient for our salvation, but not for his love. Behold what a Redeemer, what a Lord, and what a friend we have!

VI. What more salutary instruction can we therefore desire, for the reformation of our manners, than that which this divine master gave us in the beginning of his life? the want of obedience, says the holy scripture, was the cause of our misery: and this virtue having been in Christ, as it were the foundation of all those graces he merited for us; he was pleased to manifest to us thereby, that we ought like him to establish the whole fabric of christian perfection upon obedience; and as he did not spend one single moment of his life without obeying God his father, so we ought also to account all those for lost, which we do not consecrate to obedience. Let us consider then, how much of our time we spend in sleep, in eating, in idleness, and what is still more to be regretted, in criminal actions, irregular pleasures, and in all other things which separate us from God; with what faintness and remissness do we seek him, with what facility do we quit his service, and with what negligence do we labour for our own salvation, which cost him so much? If we compare the coldness in which we live, and the reasons which prevent us from loving Christ with our whole heart, with the ardour he had to suffer for us, and the rigour he exercised over himself in satisfaction for our sins, we shall be equally covered with confusion and filled with gratitude in his presence.

VII. So much has been written upon obedience and submission to the will of God, that I shall content myself with saying here; that Christ by teaching us in what manner we ought to pray, has taught us also how to obey, in these words; *thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* (Matth. vi.) For the blessed in heaven not only desire and do nothing but what God wills, but they cannot think even any thing contrary to what he ordains. So we ought not to be satisfied with keeping our wills always conformable to that of God, but we must aspire to the perfection of obedience, and submit our understandings also to him. There are so many maxims in the world, established, approved, and even consecrated, as one may say, by the specious pretences of honour, necessity and duty, which nevertheless are contrary to the law of God; and the corruption of our hearts makes us daily find out so many reasons for dispensing ourselves from obedience, under colour of the glory and service of God, that it is very easy to be deceived therein, if we are not strictly upon our guard. Let us therefore pray to the Lord with *David, to turn away our eyes that they*
may

may not see vanity (Psalm cxviii. 37.) nor take it for the truth, to illuminate us with his light in order to discover his will to us; that the purity of his doctrine, and the perfection of his example, may be the only object of our thoughts and esteem. For he that shall fix his eyes on Jesus Christ our Lord and master, who is the spotless mirror, and perfect image of the divine goodness, with a sincere desire of imitating him, and of submitting his understanding to him, shall immediately be free from a multitude of errors.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ's foresight and acceptance of every thing he was to suffer.

O Son of the living God! O my saviour and redeemer! O the comfort of my miseries, and the only remedy of my evils! Thou art come into the world to save our lost souls, to shew how much thou lovest sinners, and the desire thou hast of satisfying for them. Thou burnest with such an ardent thirst after torments and the cross, that thou wouldst not live one single moment without suffering: I even presume to say, O my God! that had it been possible or convenient, thou wouldst have come into the world on the cross, and have remained fastened thereto, from the first instant to the last breath of thy life; so incomprehensible is the excess of the love thou bearest us. But at least, if thou wast not always upon the cross whereon thou diedst, thou never livedst without suffering; thou didst not spare thy holy humanity in a body extremely delicate, and but newly formed. How pure, how great, and how divine is thy love! As thou didst never judge that body too small to be without the blessed soul that was to animate it, or without the divinity that was to be united to it; so thou didst always think it big enough to suffer; even to make it feel at once, in the moment of its formation, all the pains it was to suffer at different times, in the whole course of its life. Thou shewedst it at that time the tears, sorrows, hunger, inconveniences, poverty, fatigues, injuries, and contempts, which it was to undergo; the fetters wherewith it was to be bound.

bound, the stripes with which it was to be torn, the thorns it was to be pierced with, the cross whereon it was to be fastened, the gall and vinegar that were to be presented to it, the extreme desolation whereto it was to be reduced, and in fine the cruel death that was to consummate its sacrifice.

II. If at the age of thirty three years the only thought of those torments, which were prepared for thy holy humanity, occasioned it such a profound sorrow, that it was cast thereby into an agony, and bathed in a sweat of blood; what must its grief have been, when, at its entrance into the world, every thing it was to suffer during the whole course of its life, was represented to it in so clear, so lively, and so certain a manner? I comprehend, O my God! that that punishment was one of the greatest thou didst ever endure; since thou wast then man to feel it in its whole extent, and God to foresee it in all its circumstances. Thou didst at the same time foresee all, accept of every thing, and was sensible of all; because thy love permitted thee not to spare thyself in the smallest part of thy labours. O divine love! always active, how many artifices hast thou employed, and how many means hast thou invented to gain our hearts! There was no place, time, nor age, which thou hast not thought proper for the execution of thy designs; and when the age and place rendered thee incapable of suffering exteriorly, thou procuredst thyself interior crosses, in order to bestow continually upon us the treasures of thy grace; to maintain that fire with which thou wast consumed; and to make those sensible of its heat whom thou lovest, and desirest to draw to thee.

III. Miserable creature that I am! when I consider thy eagerness of suffering for my salvation in so tender an age, and in a body scarce yet capable of human figure! What can I say, and how dare I appear before thee? For, alas! in what time of my life soever I look upon myself, I see nothing but sin; and methinks there is no part of myself but what is infected therewith, as there was no part of thee but what was pierced with sorrow. In my mother's womb, tho' I was incapable of action, I was already like the old *Adam* by original sin, wherewith my soul was defiled; being born, and unable as yet to sin, because I had not the use of reason, I felt violent inclinations to anger, lying, pride, gluttony, disobedience, and to many other disorders, which shewed sufficiently at that time what the corruption of my heart was. When I was arrived at the age of discretion, and capable of knowing

knowing thee, O my God! instead of producing those fruits thou hadst reason to expect from me, into what disorders did I not fall? O infinite mercy! who hast borne with me till now, do not confound me! Pardon me the eagerness wherewith I pursued the bent of my corruption. What vanity, what deceit, and what presumption; how many bad thoughts, criminal desires, and shameful actions have I not been guilty of? I have lived in a profound forgetfulness of thy blessings; I have been insensible of thy goodness, rebellious against thy light, deaf to thy inspirations, disobedient to thy law, a lover of the world, disgusted with eternal things, attached to myself, remote from thee, full of self-love, and void of the love of thee! I found the time too short for satisfying my pleasures; and the world too little for satiating my corrupt desires: but it seemed great to me when I was to love it preferably to thee, or to lose thee for the sake of it. Every age appeared to me far enough advanced for offending thee, but too feeble for serving thee. I committed by will and desire, the evil that age and strength did not permit me to commit in deed: always powerful to sin; but fainting, tepid, and slothful in thy service.

IV. Thou, O my God! as the true friend of my soul, moved with compassion towards it, thou wouldst not even wait the days employed by nature in the formation of bodies; thine was formed, animated, and filled with the divine majesty, in an instant, out of the desire thou hadst to make an advantage of every moment, and to bestow on the work of love and grace, the time that nature requires for hers. And for my part, O infinite goodness! though I had not the use of reason till many years after my birth, I did not know thee even then; and tho' I found thy blessings heaped upon me in the course of my life, I did not seek thee, nor serve thee, neither did I concern myself about loving thee; but I contented myself with a languishing, or rather with a dead faith. I was present in thy thoughts when thou began to suffer; thou knewest me when thou acceptest of such great punishments, and the foresight of my miseries excited in thee the impatience of remedying them. Have mercy on me, O Lord! and convert me to thee, that I may begin, at least now, to love and obey thee; make me weep bitterly for the disorders of my past life, and change me so into thee, that I may no longer breathe after any thing but thee.

V. O that I had never offended thee! O that I had employed the whole time of my life in loving and serving thee! If in the first moment when I return to thee with my whole heart

I find

I find myself so touched, so changed and so different from what I was before; what must I have been, O my God! if I had never departed from thee? I should have been now thy faithful servant, wholly filled with thy love, and wholly transformed into thy spirit. O infinite patience! that has so long expected me. O infinite goodness! that hast borne with me till now. O infinite love! that callest me to thee, possess me, and transform me wholly into thee. From this moment to the last of my life, I resign myself to thee, to spend it entirely with thee; I am extremely sorrowful for having offended thee, O my God! behold me now at thy feet, content thy justice, and take of me all the satisfaction thou pleasest. I only entreat thee, that the same love which urged thee in so lively a manner to suffer for me, may cause a continual fountain of tears to flow from my heart, that I may weep, all the residue of my life, for the misfortune of having displeased thee. This is the business of thy love; to it I resign all my concerns; treat with it about all my necessities; and I beg nothing from thee but what it begs for me.

VI. Was it not reasonable that thou shouldst spend the first hours of thy coming into the world, with the most blessed Virgin, whom thou foundest full of grace, love, and purity; and who was so agreeable to thee, that thou wouldst become her son? Thou desiredst that I should have a share in thy love, and thou wast at that time wholly employed about my miseries and their remedy. O divine shepherd! who camest to seek, not the just, because there were none, but sinners; how thou didst love this poor strayed sheep! However the soul of the blessed Virgin lost nothing of its right for all those benefits thou bestowedst on us: thou wast rich enough both for her and us. As thy love is divine, it is neither limited nor divided; and thou givest thyself at the same time wholly to all, and wholly to every one in particular. I was no less present to thy knowledge and love than the blessed Virgin, though she was most strictly united to thee by the bond of perfect charity. After what I see, what I believe, and what I owe thee, O my divine Saviour! can there remain in me any thing that does not burn with the fire of thy love? O the lukewarmness! O the obstinacy of my heart! destroy it, O Lord! and inflame me entirely with that heavenly fire, since all my happiness consists in being consumed therewith. When thou wast pleased to accept, for my salvation, of all the pains which thy father shewed thee in the moment of thy incarnation, by that love, obedience, and perfect resignation, and by the violent sorrow wherewith thy holy humanity was overwhelmed,

overwhelmed, thou acquiredst the pardon of my sins, the dissipation of my darkness, the remission of eternal punishments, and the change of temporal ones into the merit of grace and glory. Thou meritedst for me faith, hope, charity, and all other virtues, the victory over my enemies, and a perfect deliverance from all my evils; thou didst at first fill me with blessings, and at thy entrance into the world thou didst so accomplish the work for which thou camest thither, that though thou hadst stopt there, I should have been more than sufficiently redeemed: why then, O my God! was not that sufficient for thy love, which was sufficient for my salvation? O God of love! he who loves thee not, knows thee not, and has never considered what thou hast done for him.

VII. We are never wearied with what pleases us; we desire it, and love the continuance of it. Thus the abundant communication of thy blessings, and of thyself, being to thee a most agreeable thing, thou wouldst not return into heaven, nor be satisfied with those first sufferings, which did but provoke the hunger wherewith thou wast oppressed; thou wouldst satiate it, as one may say, by thirty three years labours, and the death of the cross. O love! immense love! infinite love! let every tongue be silent, and every understanding remain in a profound admiration; diffuse thyself throughout my soul, O holy love! melt its ice; soften its hardness, that thou mayst no longer find therein any resistance to thy divine impressions; inflame, dilate, and fortify my heart; and grant that I may love thee without measure; for I cannot otherwise correspond to the manner in which thou lovest me. What shall I say, O divine love! I consecrate to thee my life, my soul; my powers, my faculties, and whatever I am. Dispose of me, and what belongs to me, according to thy will, and permit not mine ever to depart from it. I desire nothing but thee alone; give me as great a desire of being thine, as thou hast of suffering for me, that I may always love thee, and ever desire to love thee.

O mother of God, virgin most pure, and dispensatrix of graces! love you that Lord for me, who has granted me so many blessings by you; and since you know the greatness of my obligations better than any one, obtain for me the pardon of my past sins, and the grace of serving that divine Saviour faithfully for the future. O celestial court! O blessed inhabitants of heaven, you who are the conquest of that God made man for the love of men, bless him and love him for me; and inflame me for ever with that fire wherewith you perpetually burn. *Amen.*

II. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

The nine months which he passed in the womb of his blessed mother.

SEEING the son of God was so intent on searching out the means of suffering for us, the least circumstance of his actions ought not to escape our notice; and in order to preserve an eternal acknowledgment thereof, we ought to fix them deeply in our mind. His love made him invent a new kind of pain, which he alone was capable of enduring; and this was a nine months imprisonment in the bowels of his mother: he rejected every thing that could mollify its rigour, and would let nothing pass that might augment it: for very far from receiving any comfort from the divine Nature, since he had miraculously suspended the sweetness, which his blessed soul ought to have diffused over his body, by virtue of the hypostatical union, the divinity served only to make him suffer still the more. The blessed virgin herself, though she was to him a true paradise of delights, by reason of her perfect purity, did not diminish his sense of corporal pain: because those delights, containing nothing sensible, consisted only in the blessings which our Lord communicated to that holy soul, and in the mutual love which united the son and the mother, but after a most pure and spiritual manner: for the quality of mother of God did not exempt the blessed virgin from a human state; and though her pregnancy, which was the work of the Holy Ghost, was free from many miseries common to other women; yet she was subject to all those that could be compatible with her virginal purity, and eminent sanctity,

II. The Son of God being willing therefore to become like the children of *Adam*, embraced all their miseries, sin only excepted; and there was nothing with regard to the humanity, that could sweeten the inconveniencies of his prison. As his most holy conception was God's Work, and not man's, it was accomplished in an instant, and his body formed by the operation of the Holy Ghost, in the full extent required by human nature for the functions of life; but with so many perfections, that there never was any one more compleat. The soul which was united to it in the same moment, was so full of grace and wisdom, that it not only excelled every human and angelic creature, but was worthy of being united to the divinity, and of becoming the most perfect instrument of the wonders which God designed to work for the salvation of men.

Christ

Christ then possessed that plenitude of grace and wisdom in so eminent a degree, that it could not increase in him with age; and he had no less thereof in his mother's womb, than when he ascended into heaven, and sat at his father's right hand: for to grow in wisdom, had been to acquire some degree of it, which he had not before, and this defect could not agree with the dignity of his person. Certainly if any of us considers attentively what reluctance we should have, to enter again into our mother's womb, with our present reason and knowledge, and how much more readily we should chuse to undergo any other kind of pain, we shall comprehend what Christ was during nine months, who had more light and reason than all men together.

Nicodemus was terrified, when our Saviour told him, that *unless a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God*, (*John* iii. 3.) For as he grossly understood that sentence, it seemed frightful, and even impossible for a reasonable man, already old, to return into his mother's womb, and be born again. Hence it is also that *St. Augustin*, in the Hymn he sung with *St. Ambrose* on the day of his baptism, makes use of this strong expression, speaking to Christ; *O Lord, when thou tookest upon thee to deliver Man, thou abhorredst not a virgin's womb.* Now the expression of *horror*, or *abhorrence* shews an aversion accompanied with a reluctance and indignation. Our Saviour however had none of these to hinder him from shutting himself up in that strait and incommodious prison; he bore the trouble of it with the same love and patience, as he did all the other sufferings of his life, and he remained therein as many months, as it is thought *Adam* had spent hours in the delights of the earthly paradise. He would not even retrench from thence the forty days in which other children have neither life nor soul; but he anticipated the time of his own, contrary to the order of nature, that he might the sooner begin to suffer.

III. As *Job* never gave greater marks of his love to God, than when he was reduced, from the highest pitch of human prosperity, to live on a dunghill; so the son of God, who could not bear that any one should surpass him in love, expressed his in a particular manner, by descending from heaven into the bowels of a woman, to remain therein for several months. He accommodated himself in this to the opinion of men, who believe that the surest proof of friendship, is to suffer much for him one loves; and that the more unworthy he is, the more heroical is that friendship. He had no regard

to the smallness of our merit, but only fixed his thoughts on what manner he could express much love to us; that men who are naturally sociable and sensible of friendship, might be touched with his, and prefer him to all Creatures. This also obliged him to conceal his majesty, that he might be able to abase himself unto us: for as St. *Augustin* says (*Serm. 8. de nat. Dom.*) *Love cannot bear majesty, because the one removes, and the other attracts; majesty takes away confidence, and love establishes it; majesty keeps every thing below it within the bounds of respect, and love puts those upon a level that love one another.* Therefore that we might have recourse in our miseries to the divine goodness with greater freedom, it found out that admirable means of hiding its majesty; and it has had such regard to our lowness, that it seems to have sacrificed its own grandeur thereto.

IV. This clearly shews how little God will esteem those, who have a great deal of love for themselves. *God is high,* says St. *Augustin*, (*Serm. 2. de Ascens.*) *if you exalt yourselves, he will fly from you; if you humble yourselves, he will descend unto you.* Therefore although one may sometimes conceal his humility, and knowledge of one's own nothingness, before men, on account of his employments, posts, dignity, or for some other reason; yet we must confess, that nothing shews more fully, how near to, or how far from one God is, than the interior sentiment one has of himself in the presence of his majesty. But because it is easy to be deceived herein, and a man who thinks he has but a small esteem of himself, often nourishes a secret pride in the bottom of his soul: in order to discover this snare, we must consider whether in common life we love what humbles us, whether by any interior conviction of our own meanness, and by a true hatred of ourselves we sincerely desire contempt and the lowest place, and whether we shun being preferred through the fear of displeasing God; for then one may be assured of the solidity of his disposition; and when the glory of God, the good of his neighbour, and the quality of his employment requires it, he may maintain his authority before men, and still be humble before God. But if the honour of the world puffs us up, if contempt casts us down, and if confusion oppresses us and fills us with sadness and displeasure, with indignation and trouble; we ought then to lament in the presence of God over our state, beg of him with tears the spirit of humility, and acknowledge how far we are from the purity of his love, since true humility is so necessary a disposition to perfect charity; and to be fully persuaded, that we cannot obtain the
love

love of God, but by such means as Christ made use of for testifying his to us.

V. We must not here forget the extreme desire our Saviour had, of being closely united to those souls whom he loved so much. For although he could have built himself a paradise of delights, as he did for the first man, and have remained in it after he had cloathed himself with our humanity; he rather chose to conceal himself in the holy sacrament of the *eucharist*, that he might become our nourishment, and unite himself to our hearts in the most intimate manner that could be imagined.

He thereby accomplished in an admirable sense these words of the apostle St. Paul, (Rom. v. 20.) *where sin abounded, grace did abound more*; for grace now reigns where sin did reign, and Christ dwells in those hearts which sin had become master of. Man was created not to be miserable, but to be happy; and for that reason God gave him a paradise to abide in. But though man lost that place of delights through his sin, God did not change his resolution with respect to him; he gave him a new paradise in giving him the lamb of God, who is, as St. John says, (Rev. xxi. 23.) *the lamp of the holy city*, and the happiness of the heavenly country. 'Tis he who is the source of all those good things wherewith that happy abode is filled, and he makes a Paradise wherever he is; he was pleased also to make himself one of our hearts, by the love he bore us, that those who love him may possess him, and find in his possession a continual paradise by penance and love, if they happen to lose him by sin. In this paradise we are fed with the fruit of life, warmed with the fire of divine love, and honoured with heavenly visits.

Whoever therefore shall behold, with enlightened eyes and a pure heart, the inventions of the divine love, may very well say with David, (Psalm lxxxiii. 2.) *My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God*. My flesh, because it sees itself, not only united to the divine word, but also destined to receive him within its bowels; and my heart because it finds itself capable of possessing him on earth, who is the delight of heaven, with a sweet confidence of possessing him also for all eternity.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ's having passed nine months in the womb of his blessed mother.

WHO shall ever be able, O my God! to comprehend the designs of thy eternal wisdom? I adore thee to the utmost of my power; and I wish I could do it equal to the deserts of those wonderful works which thy infinite love caused thee to perform for my salvation. I desire to love thee with my whole heart, to serve thee with all my strength, and to be wholly thine. But what I offer thee is nothing in comparison to those infinite mercies, which thou hast first bestowed on me. Thou comest, O son of the living God! from the bosom of thy father, where thou art the eternal word, God of God, equal to him in divinity, in majesty, in power, in greatness, in wisdom, in glory, and in eternity of happiness. Thou comest to cloath thyself with our nature, and thou abhorrest not to remain nine months in the womb of a woman, who, though most agreeable to thy eyes by the sanctity of her soul, was not free from those corporal miseries common to other women. But here is still, O my God! less reason to be seized with astonishment, than to adore and love the immense riches of that divine goodness, which reduced thee to such a profound humiliation for my sake. Thou wast very glad, O my Lord and my God! to suffer what others suffer not. 'Tis thy mercy which proportions all our crosses. So thou wast a father full of goodness and meekness towards us, and thou hadst severity only towards thyself. Thou art the only one among all men who had suffered the misery of so troublesome a prison, and thou sufferedst it with as much knowledge and wisdom as thou art possessed of at present. Mayst thou be eternally blessed and glorified for so great a mercy.

II. Thou must needs have loved sufferings well, O my Saviour! since thou inventest new ones, which thou alone art capable of enduring. Thou wilt surpass all men in all things, in loving without bounds, in humbling thyself beyond measure, in suffering without sparing thyself, and in shewing my soul that it ought to have no other friend, no other father, and no other refuge but thee. Whence comes it then, O my God! that I love not thee with my whole heart? What can I do for thee that is not infinitely below what I owe thee? Thou keepst no bounds in thy sufferings, because thy love is the measure

ture of them. But thou observeſt not the ſame method in thoſe thou ſendeſt me; and thy goodneſs always proportions them to my weakneſs. Notwithſtanding, O my God! I complain thereof, I reſuſe the cup which thou preſenteſt me, and I remove it as far from me as poſſible. O divine Jeſus! O eternal beauty! how little do I love thee, and how much ought I to love thee! Change into ſtrength and a deſire of ſuffering for thee, the weakneſs and cowardice of my fleſh; teach me to hate it; and ſince thou perſecutedſt it in thyſelf even unto the death of the croſs, deſtroy in me the love I have for that fleſh of ſin which ruins me; and render, it O Lord! as ſubject as it ought to be to the motions of thy ſpirit.

III. But why gaveſt thou, O my Saviour, thou who art the glory of heaven, and the joy of the bleſſed, to our firſt father at his creation, a place of delights, exempt from all thoſe miſeries which we ſuffer? And why didſt thou chuſe for thyſelf who art our reſtorer and true father, only a place full of inconveniencies and miſeries? O infinite wiſdom! O the phyſician and remedy of my wounds! how clearly haſt thou ſhewn in the creation of the firſt man, that thou takeſt no pleaſure in ſeeing us ſuffer; and that thy deſign was that we ſhould be happy, without labour, or ſorrow, and brought up like princes in a paradise of delights, in order to paſs from thence to the poſſeſſion of the eternal kingdom. But the weakneſs of our nature could not bear ſo great a happineſs, without forgetting itſelf; and ſince *Adam* loſt it in the miſt of pleaſures, his children muſt endeavour to recover it by ſufferings.

'Tis therefore out of neceſſity and the deſire of ſaving us, that thou haſt put us into this ſchool of labour and tears, that we may learn therein the humility and obedience which we owe thee: and to expreſs thy love to us, thou comeſt thyſelf to ſeek us in our wanderings, to comfort us in our ſufferings, and to ſhare them with us. But this diſpoſition thou makeſt unequal: for if I receive one ſtroke from thy paternal hand thou receiveſt a thouſand for me; and if thou layeſt any burthen upon me, thou beareſt me and it upon thy ſhoulders. So that thy happineſs and delight ſeems to be in comforting me, in inſtruſting, healing, and accompanying me, and in enriching me with thy bleſſings.

IV. O infinite mercy! I bluſh with confuſion in thy preſence, when I conſider myſelf, and compare myſelf with thee. Unhappy child of *Adam*, I am baniſhed out of *Paradiſe*, and

I feel

I seek a new one upon earth, although it be an abode of miseries. I am attached to earthly things, so as to ruin myself on their account; they carry away my thoughts, senses, and desires, as if they were true and eternal goods; in order to possess them I throw myself headlong into death, and I abandon thee, O thou life of my soul! Thou wouldst not pass one single moment without suffering, and I would spend my whole life in pleasure and delight. I make to myself gods of thy creatures, by sacrificing a heart to them which I owe only to thee alone, but which I am miserable enough to refuse thee; the excess of my folly goes even so far as to make me love thy enemies, and render myself so much a slave to sin, as to commit it every day against thee. O unhappy hours! O time employed in iniquity and abomination! Thou knowest them, O Lord! and I blush to mention them. However I will confess them before thee in the bitterness of my soul. Blot them out, O my God! by thy mercy; pluck from my heart the love of sin and the world; and repair the ruins of my interior man.

V. O that I had never offended thee! Grant me the grace that all worldly pleasures may be changed with regard to me into gall and vinegar; that my whole delight may be in being humbled and in suffering with thee, O my amiable Jesus! that I may no longer have a relish of any thing but thee, and that I may be sensible only of thy love. How like art thou in all things to thyself, O thou venerable friend of my soul! Always *the most beautiful amongst the children of men*; beautiful in the beginning, in the continuation, and in the end of thy life, always thyself; ever rich in mercy and love. At thy entrance into the world thou refusedst not to lodge in human bowels, that I might believe thee, when thou tellest me I shall possess thee within mine. 'Tis to acquaint me therewith that thou inclovest thyself in those of thy blessed mother, and to persuade me before-hand of the desire thou hast to become our nourishment and very substance. What! O my God! It is not enough for thee to seek human bowels, whilst thou livest among men; thou wilt also dwell in them when thou art glorious in heaven. Is it possible that thou shouldst condescend to remain with me, to enter into my body, and much more still into the interior of my soul? O how true it is, O Lord! that *thy delights are to be with the children of men*! (Prov. viii. 31.) What findest thou in me to make thee desire to earnestly to be with me? Thou bringest thy riches with thee; what more canst thou find in a poor creature who is nothing but misery and sin, that thou art not content with

being alone, but desirest to live with it? Thou art thyself a Paradise of infinite delights? What advantage dost thou pretend to find in my indigence? And how can it be that I should become, as one may say, the paradise of him who is the eternal felicity of the blessed! Why have I not, O Lord! a sufficiency of thy light to comprehend thy wonders, and enough of thy love to seek thee without intermission? Ah! I plainly see why thou desirest to be with me; 'tis because thou art the center of my happiness; and being in thee, I shall be in a delicious paradise, where I shall taste the true fruit of life, wisdom, and love, by the communication thou wilt make to my soul of thyself, of thy riches, and of the blessings of thy sweetness.

VI. Grant me the grace, O my God and sovereign good! to find more joy in thee than in all creatures; more than in health and beauty; more than in glory and honour; more than in power and riches; more than in knowledge and friendship; more than in reputation and praises; and more in fine than in all things thou canst give me, whether visible or invisible; for thou art infinitely more amiable than all thy blessings; thou alone art most high, most powerful, most beautiful, and most noble. Thou art a true paradise, and a paradise without thee would be a real banishment. My heart can find a perfect peace in nothing but in thee alone. Thou knowest it, O Lord! and therefore thou hast invented such admirable means of abiding in me, that I might abide in thee; thou seekest me when I forget thee; thou comest to me when I fly from thee; and thou threatenest me with death when I depart from thee: O Jesus, most pure spouse of my soul! When shall I be delivered from myself, that I may dwell in thee? When will the happy moment come, when wholly taken up with thy perfections, I shall taste how sweet thou art? When shall I give myself entirely to thee, that being wholly possessed with thy love, I may no longer feel any thing of myself? How many things are there still wherewith I am concerned, which remove me from thee, which disturb me, afflict me, and occasion me a thousand obscurities and distractions, which deject me towards creatures, and hinder me from entering into, and possessing thee? Behold me in thy presence, O Jesus! What art the splendour of glory, and the consolation of my pilgrimage; but I know not what to say to thee, the voice of my poverty will plead better for me than my own, and the abyss of my miseries will bring into my heart the abyss of thy mercies. Hear that voice, O my God! and make haste to come to thy poor and unworthy servant, that thou mayst comfort him.

If I am by thy presence; thou art my joy, and without thee I cannot be content; I am miserable and full of blindness and darkness, and I shall be always so till thou hast discovered thy countenance to me, and till I am delivered thereby from myself, and let others seek what they will: for my part nothing pleases me but thee alone, O thou love of my soul! Come to me, and since thou desirest to be with me, behold me here ready to receive thee: open my heart, O amiable Jesus! say to me these words of life, *I am thy salvation*, and kindle it at the same time with the fire of thy love, (*Psalms xxxiv. 3.*)

O most holy mother of God! virgin most pure, who deservest to contain that heavenly treasure for the space of nine months; you did not possess it for yourself alone; you kept it, you nourished it, and it was entrusted to you for me; let me then have a share of it, O mother of mercy! Give me the same Lord, and may I lose every thing that separates me from him and his love; since he vouchsafes to abide in us, and abhors nothing but sin, obtain for me that purity which may render me capable of possessing him. And ye blessed spirits! over whom that amiable Saviour reigns at present, without controul, drop down upon me a spark of that love wherewith you are inflamed, that it may burn in my soul, till I share with you that happiness which you enjoy. *Amen.*

III. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

violence he did his love, by retaining it nine months without action.

CHRIST suffered also another pain in the womb of his most blessed mother, which is a natural consequence of that zeal therewith our Saviour was consumed for his father's glory. This pain was the extreme violence he then did his love, in delaying to labour in the work for which he came. Love is the nature of fire; it is the most lively of all the motions of the heart, as fire is the most active of all the elements; and God is called in the holy scripture, *a consuming fire*, (*Deut. 4.*) because of the surprising works of his love, which

would appear unworthy of his majesty, if they did not proceed from an infinite goodness, as that of *strong, invincible, omnipotent, violent, inflamed, and transforming*, perfectly agree with the divine love, and express the property of that eternal fire, which is the principle of those wonders which God performs; and as fire never makes its activity more sensible, than when it falls upon a well prepared matter, so that force with which love inflames the heart of God is incomprehensible to every created understanding. It was with that fire that the incarnate word burned in the womb of his most blessed mother, in waiting the course of nature for his coming into the world to instruct us in heavenly doctrine, to suffer the punishment which we had deserved, and to pour torrents of graces upon us. He was urged at the same time with a desire of accomplishing his work, and constrained to remain hidden and unknown, not only for several months, but for many years till the moment appointed in the eternal counsel.

II. Therefore that love finding no issue, and being violently detained by Christ, it acted upon his heart, devoured and consumed it. *If hope that's delayed afflicts the soul*, according to the expression of the holy scripture, (*Prov. xiii. 12.*) and if the more a thing is desired and esteemed, the more sensible is the delay of it, what was then the pain of that blessed soul, seeing it obliged to wait for the increase of its body to accomplish its work, that is to say, for heaping blessings upon us and for being oppressed with all those evils which it had resolved to undergo. St. *Augustin* affirms, (*Ep. 144.*) that if God were capable of any pain, it would be of that of love; for, as he is full of love, or rather all love, nothing could afflict him but the not being loved, and the seeing that what he had done and suffered for men, would be unprofitable to them: but what he could not suffer for them in his divine nature, he suffered in that which he united to himself; he was willing in the first moment of that union to shew us the greatness of his love; but the time he was obliged to pass in his mother's womb, not permitting him, that delay gave him extreme pain.

He took upon him our humanity, as the properest instrument for betokening an infinite love, and he was obliged to stop its motions from a necessity of waiting. This truth clearly appeared when his love had the power of acting; and in what manner did he treat his sacred humanity? What artifices found he not out in order to make it suffer? Nature used all its endeavours to moderate the excess of that love; but

Savior

Saviour seeing that his humanity could not suffer so much as he desired, he invented, before his death, the means of becoming our nourishment ; that making one and the same body with us, he might in the following ages, even to the end of the world, be capable of doing and suffering in us, what he could not do nor suffer in himself. He was willing also that after his death his side should be opened, as well to satisfy his love, as to declare to the whole world, that by ascending into heaven with that wound and those of his hands and feet, these divine sources should be eternally open for us.

III. Two things may serve to illustrate what we have been saying concerning the love of Christ to men ; the love which saints bear to God, and that which worldlings have for creatures. The love of the saints is a spark of that eternal fire which burns in the heart of God, and wherewith our Lord was inflamed : it also produces commonly in the saints such effects as it produced in Christ. It torments them without intermission, and makes them lead a life full of sorrows : they suffer because they do not behold him whom they love, and because they are unable in their banishment, being oppressed with the weight of the flesh, to accomplish all that God requires of them. Hence it comes that they often lose the relish of sensible objects, spend whole nights without sleep, and that the most innocent diversion, and even eating itself, becomes painful to them ; because the divine love which urges them, spreads bitterness over every thing else, and permits them not to be employed with any thing but him. Whatever they do appears nothing to them ; they burn with the desire of being entirely consumed with that sacred fire ; and the soul overburthened by the weight of the body, being unable to follow the attraction of the spirit, they spend their lives in continual pain. 'Tis for this reason that those who arrive at this state, are commonly infirm, and of a weakly health ; what they suffer interiorly is still much more ; but this is not the place to speak of it, and every one is not capable of comprehending it : none but those who have experienced it, know what pure love occasions that soul to suffer which it possesses ; how difficult it is to express with words that sweetness and peace, always mingled with sorrow and torment ; and how much more patience in fine is necessary at that time to support the weight and trouble of life, than to endure the evils of this world. It was in this sense that the apostle thought himself so unhappy, (*Rom. vii.*) because the weight of his body permitted him not to follow the motion of the spirit ; and it was for this reason that finding Jesus Christ lived in him, he looked upon death as the

the beginning of his happiness: (*Phil. i. 21.*) and that David comforted his afflicted soul, by making it hope that one day it should be wholly employed in the praises of God; and that his tears were his food day and night, because he beheld not his God, *Psalms xli. 4.* The holy prophet sufficiently gave to understand thereby, that the interior torment of his love far surpassed what he suffered exteriorly.

IV. Now if one single spark of the divine love, which was confined within the narrow bounds of this mortal life, occasioned the saints so much pain, that their exile seemed insupportable to them, what must Christ's pain have been, who possessed the plenitude of that love, when he saw himself obliged to wait so long for the time of labouring for the glory of his father, and the salvation of mankind?

There are few but know the transports of profane love, and the violence with which it moves towards its object; hence arises grief from being separated from it, eagerness of seeing it, joy in possessing it, fear of losing it, and sorrow for having lost it: such love considers not the nature of its object; whether it be good or bad; and it pursues it with such earnestness, that it esteems as nothing the trouble it takes in gaining it. Every thing that opposes its desires, how just soever it may be, appears unjust and hateful to it; on the contrary it approves, pursues, and embraces, without distinction, whatever serves to satisfy them: it tries all things, undertakes every thing, and nothing is difficult to it but the privation of what it loves. A man in this condition becomes insensible, blind, obstinate, incapable of any good counsel, and follows such a conduct as he himself would condemn, if he were less prepossessed with his passion. This appears still more clearly in those, who being touched with any motion of grace, endeavour to break their chains, and to rid themselves of the creature, in order to return to God: for we see then with what obstinacy and blindness a heart, plunged into those earthly affections, resists right reason, the truth, and God.

I omit many other reflections which experience daily furnishes us with, and only mention that the pains of this life proceed commonly but from the dispositions of our heart, which desires too earnestly what it cannot possess, or finds not its rest in what it possesses, after having so much desired it; because the heart of man being greater than the goods it loves, it can never be filled therewith: agitated therefore incessantly by its own desires, it suffers the just punishment which

which God has established for those who love him not. For thou hast so ordained, O Lord! says St. Augustin, and it always happens, that every irregular mind becomes its own punishment.

Now if earthly love, which far from being a participation of the divine, is but at most a rough image of it, or like a painted fire in comparison of a real one; if this love I say has so much power over men, what must not the holy love have done, which was violently retained in the heart of Christ?

V. But when a Christian comes to cast his eyes upon these two different loves, what ground has he not for being confounded? For if he compares his own with that of Christ, he will find himself, as St. Augustin says, speaking of his own wanderings, in a vast region of dissimilarity; because the excellence and dignity of the soul consisting in bearing the image of its creator, when it forsakes, as another prodigal child, the happy region of the divine resemblance, it can go no where but into a far country, where it will be overwhelmed with misery and confusion, and find nothing that approaches to the purity of its creator. Now if man cannot comprehend what the extent of Christ's love was, he will see at least that he is very remote from it; he will feel by the baseness of his affections, and the displeasure they give him, that he loves only himself; and he will be ashamed that he does nothing for him to whom he owes all he is, all he has, and all he hopes for.

CONTEMPLATION.

On the violence Christ did his love, by retaining it nine months without action.

THOU canst not remain without action, O celestial fire! O divine love! and when thou seemest to do nothing outwardly, 'tis then thou makest the greatest havoc within. Thou art a God of love, O amiable Jesus! thou art a pure fire, and thou hast need of nothing but thy own love for tormenting thyself. To what extremity dost thou reduce it, by keeping it thus confined in such a small compass? What violence dost thou not do it? One has always a lively feeling of

of what one ardently desires; thou burnest with the desire of heaping blessings upon me, of washing me in thy blood, of suffering and dying for me, and of being wholly sacrificed for my love and salvation; and the delay of thy sacrifice makes thee sigh, and consumes thee interiorly.

Thou desirest to appear in the world, and thou art constrained to live hidden therein: thou desirest to declare thy holy truths, and thou art obliged to keep silence; thou desirest to call sinners, to heal the sick, to fill the world with thy miracles and graces, to suffer in fine and die for men, and thou art compelled to remain unknown among them. Thou obeyest thy eternal father out of love: but obeying thou desirest, and desiring thou expectest painfully the course of nature: thou art not in a condition of suffering those immense labours to which thou art destined; but thou sufferest the delay of them: this is a torment for thee which the world is unacquainted with; there's only he who loves thee, O my God! that can comprehend it.

II. If thy servants, when thou givest them a small taste of the purity of thy love, are touched in so lively a manner with the blindness of the world, the continuance of their banishment, the zeal of thy glory, and the salvation of their brethren; if the incapacity of accomplishing whatever thy love, and the desire of pleasing thee, inspires them with, be to them a continual martyrdom; if a single spark of that fire, which proceeds from thee, and falls upon them, consumes them, what a conflagration must there not be produced in thee by thy desire, expectation and delay, with the whole plenitude of pure love?

But, O Lord! hast thou not wherewith to employ thy love? canst thou not alluage thy torment? behold here a poor creature at thy feet, full of confusion and sin, who expects no remedy but from thy goodness alone. Cast upon his interior misery the eyes of thy infinite mercy, and heal the mortal wounds wherewith he is covered.

III. How remote am I from thee, O my God! and how opposite is my conduct to thine! What thy love performs in thee in order to bring thee to me, terrestrial love does the same in me to separate me from thee. I run with an insatiate thirst after the goods of this world; I am afflicted when I possess them not, or when they are not such as I wish them. I expect them impatiently, seek them eagerly, enjoy them with

with disquiet, and lose them with grief; and they justly cause me all these pains, since they separate me from thee, who art my only repose and sovereign happiness. Miserable wretch that I am! tho' I know the vanity of these amusements, yet I know not, O my God! either what I am, or what thou art; otherwise I should die with grief for having esteemed thee less than the world, and for having forsaken thee for a moment's pleasure.

How much am I obliged to sing thy mercies eternally: for, alas! where should I be without thee? What would become of me, O divine goodness! if thou wert not infinite? Could a limited patience ever have borne with me? How many times, O my God! when thou enteredst into my soul with a desire of abiding in it, and enriching it with thy gifts, have I banished thee from thence without shame to myself, or respect to thee, that I might make my irregular affections reign therein in thy stead. Thou sawest afterwards how far they carried me astray. Thou calledst me back, I returned; and I have found in thee a father full of affection, a friend full of goodness, and a heart ready to forget my wanderings. Thou receivedst me, thou gavest me a favourable welcome, thou inspiredst me with wholesome counsels, and thou filledst my whole soul with joy at thy return; and after all I have still the obduracy and ingratitude not to resign myself entirely to thy love; I even return to my former affections, I remove thee from me by new sins, and I rather chuse to offend thee than to possess thee.

IV. Is it possible that I am still living, O my God! and how can I think on all these things, and confess them before thee, without dying with grief? O infinite mercy, O immense goodness! O eternal sweetness! How great reason hadst thou to banish me from thee for ever, to cast me headlong into hell, and to deliver me up to the rage of devils? And yet thou wouldst not do it; thou bearest with me, thou expectest me, thou even sufferest me to despise thee, and thou still offerest me thy hand. O thou life of my soul! in what a condition am I when I abandon thee? I am void of life, void of strength, void of light, and void of love, a slave to sin and the devil. This is saying too little: I am without thee who art my God! my all, my sovereign good, and my only hope; and this compleats my misery.

How unhappy am I! will not the time of this pilgrimage have an end? and shall I never see myself out of the danger
of

of losing thee? Pardon me, O Lord; pardon me, divine Jesus; pardon me, O Lamb of God! what displeases thee in me, grant that I may be contrite with sorrow at the sight of my sins: I cast them all, and myself with them, into that fire which burns in thee; heal me, O Lord! purify me, transform me into thee, and accomplish the eternal designs which thou hast upon my soul.

V. When shall I see myself possessed with thy love in such a manner, that I may truly say thou art my God, my love, my Lord, my all, and I am wholly thine? When shall I despise all the things of this world, so far as to desire nothing but thee alone? When shall I be so sufficiently weary of this life, as to hate it equally to the love I have borne it? I burn at present with the desire of loving and possessing thee, O thou life of my soul! grant that this fire may always continue, and that the sufferings, with which it shall please thee to try me, may never extinguish it. What wilt thou have me to do, O my sweet love? May every thing I have hitherto loved be turned against me, that I may be obliged to turn to thee. I am resolved to break with all creatures, and to be at peace only with thee alone. I renounce all things for love of thee; I desire nothing but thee; I give myself to thee, and I resign myself entirely into thy hands. Make me suffer what thou plearest: the severest cross shall be sweet to me, provided I be fastened to it with thy love.

Teach me, O Lord! to bear the weight of my flesh in such a manner, that I may never offend, nor lose thee. Teach me to suffer much for thee; and to esteem thee infinitely above every thing that is less than thee. Let me account nothing for the future as a loss but of thy grace, and as a gain but that of thy love. May I hate every thing that removes me from thee, and love ever thing that brings me to thee. Thou art my only love, and the sole aim of my life, of my desires, and of my actions. May I seek thee, sigh after thee, and be united to thee; may every thing that is not thee become insupportable to me, may my thoughts and sentiments be terminated in thee alone, and may I find no joy but in suffering for thee, and in doing thy will.

Forget, O Lord! the sins I have committed, and regard the desires thou inspirest me with. Thou knowest better than any one, what torment is caused by the expectation of a good that is ardently desired; make haste then, O amiable Jesus!

to come to me, and unite me to thee: for I am violently oppressed with the desire of possessing thee. Come, Lord, dispel the darkness of my soul by thy presence, and grant that its greatest pain may be to expect thy coming. O holy love! when wilt thou accomplish thy work in me? Must thou be wholly employed in tormenting that innocent lamb? Wilt thou not also undertake to subdue and tame this ravenous wolf which I present to thee? and shall I never see myself wholly changed into, and possessed with thee?

VI. Is there any reason to wonder that I should desire thee so earnestly, O thou God of my soul! Alas! I am miserable without thee; and thou findest no advantage with me but the pleasure of loving me and heaping thy blessings upon me: for altho' thou remainest in obscurity and silence, tho' thou sufferedst not so much as thou desiredst during the first nine months of thy life, yet thou didst not spend them in idleness. Thou employedst all that time in feeling my evils, in offering thyself to thy father to be my remedy, in obtaining me the pardon of my sins, and in meriting for me an infinite number of graces. I was present to thee at that time, thou lovedst me, and thy love called me already to thy union and service. The corporal nourishment and increase thou wast pleased to take, and every drop of blood which was formed in thy body, were offered to thy eternal father for me. In every moment of thy life, thy love was renewed, and produced in thee fresh desires of suffering for my salvation.

What couldst thou have done more for me, O my Saviour! though I had been thy last end, as thou art mine? I adore that infinite love, so general and so particular at the same time, so antient and so new, so constant and so frequently renewed: I have not words to express what I feel, and I can only admire and be silent.

VII. What, O Lord, wilt thou come to me, wilt thou be sacrificed for me? permit me to ask thee whether thou consideredst what thou art, and what I am: art thou not blinded through the excess of thy love? 'Tis me then whom thou lovest and seekest, O unlimited goodness! O boundless love! Come, O Lord! perform in me what thou performest in thyself; and since love is the sole rule of thy conduct, let it be also that of mine. Canst thou be any thing indebted to me for the weak desire I have of loving thee tenderly, and of living only for thee? Alas! what I can do is nothing in regard of what I owe thee. I cannot be the first in loving; let me

be

be at least the second, and let me correspond, by the small love which I am capable of, to the infinite love thou hast for me. But I can do nothing without thee, O divine love! and the very desire which I feel is thy work.

Remove from me, O Lord! every thing that can remove me from thee; break down that wall which separates me from thee; and may that love which made thee descend unto me, make thee also destroy in me whatever is displeasing to thee. Regulate my desires, my hope, my strength, my whole soul, my whole body, and all my actions, according to thy holy will. Thou alone knowest me perfectly, thou alone seeest the extent of my misery, as thou art its only remedy. Behold me here in thy presence, O my God! thou knowest what I desire, with what earnestness, or tepidity, I desire it; what I owe thee, and the need I have of thy love. Grant me what thou knowest to be necessary for me, and prepare me to receive what thou alone canst give me. I am thine, O my God! and thou hatest nothing of what thou hast made; let thy love plead before thee for me: thou beholdest me prostrate at thy feet, breathing with my whole soul and strength after the happiness of possessing thee. When wilt thou come and inflame me with the fire of thy love, O my Saviour! my life, and my most amiable Jesus!

Who can ever comprehend, O most blessed mother of God! the graces you received during the nine months of your pregnancy? Here also my tongue must be silent to allow my heart to speak. Give me that Lord whom you possess; give him to me, O mistress of my life! give him to me, O source of my hope! I can neither wish nor ask for any thing better; and you know I desire nothing but him alone. Obtain for me an ardent heart to desire him, a pure heart to receive him, and a constant heart never to lose him. O blessed spirits! whose joy consists in loving always, and in being ever loved, grant me a share of that happiness which you enjoy, that I may always love, since I am ever loved by that divine Saviour, who lives and reigns in you. *Amen.*

CONTEMPLATION.

On Christ in the Moment of his Incarnation.

I Adore thee, O word incarnate! I adore thee, O son of the living God! I adore thee, O true God! clothed with my flesh, and subject to my miseries! Thou art come then, O thou desired of all nations, the salvation of my soul, the true life and only relief of sinners! Let not heaven glory in being thy only place of abode, since thou art become the companion of my banishment: let no creature despise me, how noble soever it may be: for in fine I adore no angels, and yet the angels adore a man! Thy hour is come, O fountain of living waters! O river abounding in mercies! and thou art going to overflow the earth with the riches of heaven. Thou forgettest our sins, and thou takest our miseries upon thyself. Thou comest O spouse of our souls! and thou comest full of grace and truth; but of what grace? of what truth? Ah! how true art thou in thy promises, O my God, when the world least deserved it, when sin reigned therein, when all nature was corrupted, and when thou hadst the greatest reason to hate us; it was then thou madest thy truth appear, thou gavest thyself to us, thou camest to seek us and assist us by thy presence, and thou becamest like us. None but thou alone can be so true in all things; and thou never failest to fulfil thy promises at the time appointed for their accomplishment.

When thou seemest far from us, thou art near us; and thou makest us feel thy presence always accompanied with grace and mercy; for thou bringest with thee riches, salvation, life, peace, plenty, greatness, and the true felicity of those souls thou comest to seek, and of the world thou comest to save. No, my Lord! thou comest not alone, thou leavest not thy treasures in heaven, thou bringest all thy blessings with thee; thou lovest nothing of what thou art, in becoming what I am; I ought no longer to keep at a distance from thee thro' the fear of thy greatness, since I behold thee encompassed with my misery. I embrace thee, therefore, O my God! and I love thee, because thou art my happiness, the fountain of all my blessings, the companion of my pilgrimage, the repose of my soul, my joy, my glory, and my salvation.

II. O how rich am I in possessing thee! How the angels envy me now, since I have in thee an advantage which they have

have not; for I have a God who has taken my nature upon himself, and they have not a God who has taken upon him the nature of angels. Adore him, O ye blessed spirits! who is my sovereign happiness and yours. O divine love! how powerful art thou! I cannot commit so many sins, but thou canst still pardon me more; and all my ingratitude never deprives thee of the will of granting me forgiveness. Though I leave thee, I do not lose thee: when I depart from thee, thou drawest near to me; and thou bindest me with the chains of thy love, in cloathing thyself with my flesh of misery. Thou givest thyself wholly to me, and thou minglest thyself with me, in such a manner that I cannot separate myself from thee, nor lose thee without losing myself, since thou art become what I am.

I plainly perceive it, O Lord! that thou art drawn by love, and that it is love which thou requirest. Thou comest to us entirely burning with that divine fire, that we may be inflamed therewith; and that we may never burn with any other, thou diffusest it every where; even those who perish feel its heat; and they are lost only because they shut their hearts against the holy flame thou castest into them. I open mine, to thee, O Lord! I resign it wholly to thy love, and it is my greatest desire that it may be consumed thereby. Why have I not an infinite love that I may love thee infinitely? It is true thou art an infinite good, and my love is limited; but since thou art wholly mine, I love thee with thy whole self.

III. O that I had always loved thee! O that I had always burnt with thy love! O that thou hadst always been the master of my heart! O that I had never done any thing that could have separated me from thee! Though human nature be perfect in thee, and though it be most pure and full of grace, yet it is a part of mine, however miserable I am. In thee it can neither be guilty nor corrupt, as it is in me; on the contrary in thee it becomes the instrument of my happiness; and whilst I am lost in it, thou vouchsafest to save me by it. Save me then, O my true happiness! Enlighten me, O purest light! Support me, O divine strength! since thou hast vouchsafed to subject thyself to all the miseries of my temporal life, give me thy eternal life, and grant me a share of thy graces, since thou art filled therewith, to bestow on me. May that mercy and love which oblige thee to become man, force thee also to compassionate that humanity which is so weak and corrupt in me.

Thou

Thou hast been pleased to shew, O my God ! that whatever thou doest amongst men, thou doest as it were for thyself, since thou art become like them. Heal then my wounds, as if they were thy own : guide me, govern me, assist me, and purify me, since I am thine ; and since for the honour of that nature thou hast assumed, thou wouldst have all men to be pure, holy, rich, and happy. I am thine by justice, and I desire with all my heart to be thine also by love. Thou beholdest me at thy feet, O Lord ! I closely embrace them, and will not leave them, for thou art wholly mine. I resign myself entirely to thy will, since thou hast acquired the possession of my soul by thy love. O divine love ! change me so, that thou mayest also say, thou art wholly mine, poor creature. O that I could see these two things accomplished ! that I were wholly thine, as thou art wholly mine ; but there is only thou, O divine fire ! that canst do it ; it is thy part to warm me, to inflame me, and to transform me into thyself.

IV. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

The severity wherewith he treated his body at his nativity.

THE hour being come, in which the word incarnate was to be born of a virgin, and appear to the world, the motion of his joy was so great, that the royal prophet compares it to the first effort of a giant in some great enterprise : *He has rejoiced, says he, as a giant to run his race. (Psalm xviii. 7.)* Being come upon earth and finding it still harder frozen by the indifferency of men, than by the coldness of the season, he called the angels of heaven to congratulate him at his coming. The other creatures, and even the most insensible, would not have failed doing it also after their manner, if they had been allowed ; and they would have expressed as much joy at his birth, as they did sorrow at his death. But as our Saviour's design was to diffuse upon earth a most heavenly spirit, he appeared thereon at first in a state opposite to the love of earthly things ; and because he came to condemn the vain joys of the world, he would suffer nothing but the rejoicings
of

of heaven. The B. virgin received her creator alone, and saluted him for herself and all mankind; because she alone was capable of acquitting herself of that duty, and supplying the defect of all human nature.

II. So when she perceived herself near her time, not by any new pains, like other women, but by the encrease of her love, and the desire she felt of seeing before her eyes, and holding in her arms, the only son of God and her own; she came to *Bethlehem* with *Joseph* her spouse, in order to obey the emperor's edict; and to pay for herself and her son the tribute which was ordained. This was a small city, where there was at that time a great concourse of people; because all that were of the race of *David* were obliged to repair thither. So the B. virgin finding no inn, nor any other house, that she could lodge in, was obliged to retire into an open stable. It was not without a particular wisdom that she stayed there, since she was directed in all things by the Holy Ghost. Though she found herself near her delivery, and though this reason might have hindered her from leaving *Nazareth*, yet she departed from it to seek the place, where she knew that the son of God made man, whom she carried in her bowels, had resolved to be born; and like a faithful servant, the quality of which she no less esteemed than that of mother, she chose rather to follow her son's will, than her own desire of bringing him into the world, in a place less unworthy of so high a majesty.

III. She retired into a corner of that stable, which was exposed to the cold and winds, and fell into a profound contemplation. Then the word incarnate, by his own power, and a subtilty proper to glorious bodies, came into the world without hurting the integrity of that most pure virgin, at midnight in a small body, but perfectly beautiful; and was laid upon the straw by the hands of his mother. At that moment she found her breasts miraculously filled with a most heavenly milk; and prostrating herself upon the ground, she humbly adored the son of God, and her own: she took him up in her arms, wrapt him up in swaddling cloaths, gave him suck, and beheld him a long time in admiration and silence. I leave to the contemplation of pious persons, what words cannot explain; and I do not pretend here to represent what the sentiments of the B. virgin were at that time, nor what her heart said to her son. The angels likewise rendered their duties to him, acknowledging and adoring him as their Lord: they also called the shepherds thither by heavenly songs, praising God

and saying; *Glory in the highest heavens to God, and on earth peace to men of good will.* (Luke ii. 14.)

These angelical words have several senses, all which are of very great consolation to us.

IV. First, they signify that the war kindled by sin between God and men is at last happily ended; and that the peace which is newly made and confirmed for ever, by the new born Saviour, gives a free access to God, to every good will, to every good desire, and to every sincere love of the heart of man

Secondly, that men may now shelter themselves from the justice and wrath of God, under the protection of the word incarnate; because the divine goodness finds in him more than sufficient reason for pardoning us, and receiving us into his friendship, and requires nothing but our good will: that is to say, that this peace is the work of the liberality of God, and the good will of men.

Thirdly, these words have also another sense most agreeable to the love which God expresses to us in this mystery. Sinners are called in the holy scripture, children of wrath, of perdition, and of death, because they are slaves to sin: but we are become through our Lord Jesus Christ, the adoptive children of God. As this happiness proceeds not from our own merits, but from the love and good will which God expresses to us in giving us his son, we are called by the angels, men of good will; that is, of the divine will, always employed in doing good. Thus the angels declare peace to the children of that paternal goodness, which is the fountain of all good things.

V. These songs of the angels, and all the marks of their joy, must not make us forget the pain which our Saviour already endures for our humanity to suffer; since in the midst of this heavenly rejoicing, he loses not the remembrance of our salvation. He could have been received in purple at his birth; but he would be laid on the ground upon straw, and have no bed but what was common to him with beasts. Thus it is he begins already to treat his body, and to fulfil what David had foretold of him, that he should be *a worm, and no man: a reproach of men and out cast of the people.* (Psalm xxi. 6.)

VI. That state wherein he is born cannot be attributed either to his weakness or infancy ; since he neither offered himself, nor was born, but because he would be so ; but to a particular disposition of his providence. For being master of the whole world, he ordained that at his birth the sceptre should be out of the House of *David*, from whence he descended in a right line by the B. virgin his mother, that he might be born of a mother that was poor ; that the *Romans* should then be masters of *Judea* ; that *Augustus* should have all his subjects numbered ; that those who were of the House of *David* should be obliged to go to *Bethlehem* ; that his B. mother should at that time be near her delivery ; and that she should not find any other place to retire into but a stable. He clearly shews from thence how far the ways of God are from the thoughts of worldly men, all the maxims of whom he overturns by his birth alone : the small account we ought to make of temporal conveniencies which are so passionately sought after ; and the severity wherewith we ought to treat our bodies : for if Christ treated his so roughly, which was pure, innocent, and perfectly subject to the divine will, what contempt ought we not to have for ours which is a body of sin, and the capital enemy of our happiness ?

VII. He was pleased therefore for our instruction, that his body, though sacred and delicate as it was, should be laid on the ground upon a little straw ; because he knew how dangerous the love of our own flesh, and the false peace we keep with its concupiscences, is for our salvation ; since it occasions us to lose all the fruit of those labours which our Saviour endured for us, and of the merits he has acquired us. And certainly if self-love, separate from corporal weakness, caused so much disorder in heaven amongst the angels, and precipitated a great number of them into hell, what will it not do in creatures formed of clay, who abandon themselves to their irregular appetites ? This made St. *Bernard* lament : “ Alas ! said he, we shall never be entirely delivered from self-love till in heaven.” “ ’tis a natural propension which we shall carry thither, but which will be so satiated there with the possession of God that it will lose all the malignity which it makes use of to pervert us, whilst we live on earth.” But whoever applies not himself to combat it in this life, and to regard it as an enemy so much the more terrible, as it the more sweetly flatters our inclinations, ought not to hope for the salvation of his soul.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ in his Nativity.

TIS in this moment, O divine Jesus! that I ought to be wholly inflamed with the fire of thy charity. Enlighten my mind with thy eternal light. Reunite the multiplicity of my thoughts; recollect all my interior senses; dispel the clouds and darkness of my soul, that I may see thee, hear thee, love thee, receive thee, and embrace thee, with a heart pure and worthy of thee. How beautiful art thou, O spouse of my soul! how rich art thou, and how many blessings bringest thou to us in thy birth! How full of love and goodness towards men is thy entrance into this place of misery! Mayest thou be for ever blessed, since thou comest in the name of the Lord, and art thyself the Lord of Heaven and Earth. Come, O my salvation! come my glory! come the desire and happiness of thy poor creature. I adore thee born in my flesh; I adore that body, that soul, that divinity, that love and infinite mercy with which thou comest to us. Thou appearest in a land desert, void of all good, and full of all evil. Thou art in the midst of sinners, surrounded with poor shepherds, thou hast made a heaven of the earth, and of a stable a paradise. The angels descend from heaven to come and adore thee on earth. Our exile is crowned with glory, and the canticles of the blessed spirits are heard in this valley of tears. Paradise is wherever thou art; because thou art a paradise of spiritual delights to those souls that love thee. With thee, O Lord! every thing is pure, holy, and peaceable, every thing is sweet, amiable, and happy.

II. If thou seekest us, O my God! when we seek not thee; and if thou vouchsafe to come into our miserable abode without being invited thither, what wilt thou do for him who desires thee, invites thee, and calls thee? I call thee, O divine Jesus! with all my power; come Lord, enter into and be born in my soul, fill it with thy light, give thy peace to its good will: for, alas! thou wilt find no good works in us. We are so destitute of virtues, that we have at most only good desires, and they also must come from thee. Thou reservest for thyself all the labour and pain; and it is sufficient for thee to perceive a good will in us, which thou thyself wilt fulfil, and give it grace to accomplish what it desires.

If there be any good in me, 'tis because I am thy work, and the child of that paternal good will, which is an inexhaustible fountain of blessings. Thou also requirest nothing of me, but a good will, in order to communicate to me those blessings thou designest me. I offer it to thee, O Lord! and I offer thee nothing but what is thine, since thou givest me it; and since I receive from thy goodness the desire I actually feel of loving thee, possessing thee, and of being wholly thine. Supply, O sovereign perfection! the weakness and imperfection of my will: for, alas, what am I, and what good can I have without thee? Animate this spark of love thou givest me with thy breath, O divine spirit! grant it may become a flame, and that I may be consumed thereby.

III. How different art thou from what thou appearest, O divine infant! Human eyes are not piercing enough to discover any thing else in thee but a small, weak, and delicate body, frozen with cold, weeping, in want of every thing, laid on the ground among beasts, and as it were the outcast of the people; and yet thou art the son of the eternal father, *the splendor of his glory, and the figure of his substance*, (Heb. i. 3.) God infinite, and omnipotent, the treasure of divine riches, the joy of the blessed souls, the delight of those who love thee, the happiness of those who desire thee, and the repose of those who possess thee. How great and how little art thou at the same time. O infant God! thou hast put thyself in this state to draw our tenderness the more easily to thyself; thou rejectest none, thou art born in an open place, every one has a free access to thee, and thou permittest all to embrace thee with love. Come then into my arms, O divine infant! since in embracing thee I embrace my God, I hold my God, I enjoy my God and sovereign good.

Thou concealest thy majesty, O God of glory! that men may approach to thee without fear, and treat familiarly with thee. For who would presume to appear before thee, if thy goodness rendered thee not as accessible as thou art? Come into my soul, O divine infant! and satisfy its desire of possessing thee; remain with me, repose in me, shew me the beauty of thy countenance, soften the hardness of my heart by that meekness of a lamb, and transform it entirely into thy love. Let me never depart from thee, let my heart encrease with thee, may it be dilated, and acquire strength to love thee constantly, serve thee faithfully, and accomplish thy holy will in all things.

IV. Adorable

IV. Adorable Jesus, divine word, and eternal wisdom! thou comest to seek men, why art thou not born as they are, and amongst them? why art thou born in a stable? why takest thou not at least an abode of men? why treatest thou thy body so inhumanly? It is neither by chance or out of weakness that thou usest it so, since thou art the increated wisdom, and supportest the universe by thy power: thou art born thus, because thou art so pleased; and the usage thou sufferest is thy own choice. But why chusest thou, O Lord, this so rigorous a treatment? why so much severity against so innocent a body? It is because thou knowest my evils, as thou art their only and true remedy: thou knowest that my body and flesh are my cruellest enemies; that the law of my members rebels continually in me against the law of my mind, and makes me lose all the fruit of thy mercies. Thou treatest thy flesh, tho' it be purity itself, and the instrument of those infinite blessings thou bestowest on me, as I ought to treat mine. How blind am I, if I see not what thou teachest me by this conduct; how miserable am I, if seeing it I am not ashamed to flatter my body, and spare this enemy of my salvation, so far as to prefer its interest to thine, to lose thee for satisfying it, and to lose thee for sparing it.

O light of my heart! O master and model both of eternal truths! how clearly dost thou shew me what I owe my body! grant also that the same love, which reduces thee to this excess of suffering for my instruction and cure, may produce in me a spirit wholly new, which may make me hate my flesh equally to the love I have borne it.

V. But my body, O Lord! is a part of myself, it walks with me, it accompanies me every where, it enters into and is concerned in the same things which regard thy service; but it would have the first place therein, and I am so remiss as to condescend to its desires. What shall I do, O my God? how shall I be able to support the weight of so many miseries, and this law of my flesh ever contrary to the law of thy commandments? I can only find in thee alone, O heavenly physician! the remedy I have need of; and 'tis to give me it that thou art born, and already treatest thyself so severely. Heal therefore the corruption of my heart by the purity of thine, and support by the vigour of thy spirit the weakness of mine. The place where thou art born cannot be sensible of thy presence, it will always remain what it is, and thou wilt not change its nature; but thou canst, O Lord! by thy presence soften the
hardness

hardness of my heart, correct the irregularity of my affections, and elevate the lowness of my desires. Quit then the stable, and come to abide in me; that thou mayest enlighten, touch, and change me. Come, O my God! that I may know thee, adore thee, and embrace thee; and that I may hate myself to love thee. Enter into my soul, and I shall be humbled and confounded by thy presence, and thou wilt be glorified by my humiliation; thou wilt teach me thy truth, thou wilt communicate thy strength to me for overcoming my enemies, and thou wilt destroy in me this earthly spirit to make thy divine spirit live and reign therein. Be ever present to my eyes, O divine Jesus! establish thy abode in my heart, and may I be so charmed with thy beauty and sweetness, that I may entirely lose the taste of the things of this world.

VI. All my misery proceeds from my accomplishing the desires of the flesh contrary to thy will. Thou knowest my infirmity, O Lord! and the little strength I have for resisting the occasions of offending thee: nothing but thy omnipotent hand is capable of fortifying and defending me against myself. I cast myself at thy feet; I present myself before thee with all my wounds and miseries. I will do whatever thou requirest of me, and I desire in all things only the accomplishment of thy holy will; if my rebellious flesh resists thereto, humble it, O Lord! mortify it, and make it sensible of the force of thy blessed spirit.

O most holy virgin mother! be sensible of my misery, assist me in breaking the hardness of my heart, and destroying the contradictions of this miserable body, that every thing in me may be subject to that divine Saviour, and that I may not lose the fruit of his labours, obtain for me the grace of overcoming myself and of serving him, of hating myself and of loving him. O angels of heaven! O most pure souls! who enjoy the sovereign happiness, eternally bless the Saviour of my soul, and render him infinite thanksgivings for all the blessings he has bestowed on me; be my intercessors with him, that I may not be overwhelmed with the weight of my flesh, but that it may be always subject to the spirit of God.
Amen.

V. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

The tears he shed for our sins.

THE first thing our Saviour did at his coming into the world, was to weep, as other children do; and it is a great subject of admiration to us, to behold the son of the living God thus conceal his eternal wisdom; the divine word remain in silence; the joy of the blessed shed tears; and the sovereign power wrapt in swaddling cloaths in the arms of a woman. As all these appearances of weakness proceed only from love, they furnish those who love Jesus Christ with an ample matter of contemplation, and cast them into a profound astonishment at the sight of so many wonders. For though he weeps like other children, the cause of his tears is infinitely different. *David* had foretold of him, that he should be devoured with the zeal of the house and the glory of God, (*Psalms* lxxviii. 12.) so far as to take upon himself the expiation of all the crimes of the whole world: indeed he felt in so lively a manner, at his entrance into the world, the infinite number of sins, which his eternal wisdom placed altogether before his eyes, that he then began to weep, and afterwards spent his life, and died at last, in sorrow and grief. Those tears shed for sinners, joined to the dignity of his divine person, were so powerful with God his father, according to the testimony of the apostle, (*Heb.* v. 7.) that they rendered him favourable to us, and merited for us the pardon of our offences. For whilst our Saviour was interiorly taken up with the thoughts of our miseries, and his blessed soul, with all its powers remained united to God, whom it clearly beheld, his body was bathed in tears, and his heart penetrated with a most lively sorrow for all the crimes, which had been committed from the beginning of the world, and which would be committed till the consummation of ages.

II. As he never spared himself in any thing when he was to express his love to us, and as the ground was wholly moistened with the blood he sweat in the garden of *Olives*, (*Luke* xxii. 44.) so we may believe, that he bathed every place where he prayed with his tears; that his bed was watered therewith every night, according to the expression of the royal prophet, (*Psalms* vi. 7.) and that he disposed himself, by that bath of tears, to the baptism of blood after which he sined: but how bitter these tears were is inexpressible, since they were caused by a sorrow so

so much the more lively as it was more interior and profound.

None but those who have felt the pains of the mind, know how far they surpass those of the body. The impression made on the soul by any evil, commonly follows from the knowledge it has thereof : now Christ alone perfectly knowing the number and enormity of the evils for which he wept, he alone was also capable of feeling the whole weight of them. This made him say to his father by the mouth of *David*, *Save me, O God ! for the waters have entered even into my soul. I am come into the depth of the sea, and a tempest has overwhelmed me. I have laboured crying——my eyes have failed——the zeal of thy house has devoured me,* (Psalm lxxviii. 1, 10.)

III. When the saints would express the deformity of sin they affirm that if men saw it clearly, the abhorrence they would conceive of it would be capable of making them die. This is a truth which God has made some of his servants sensible of ; but as he always spares their weakness, he never gives them that clear sight but for a short time, and after an abundant communication of his spirit : and though this light be given them only for purifying themselves, he stands close by them at that time, that they may be able to bear it ; he conceals a part of it from them when it becomes too strong ; and he inspires them with a quite new confidence in his goodness, which engages them still more strictly to serve and love him.

If any one thinks this is speaking with too much exaggeration of the horror of sin, let him cast his eyes on Christ, and comprehend that this equitable judge of the greatness of our evils, did not think it was too much, when he gave his blood, his life and infinite merits for expiating them. This very idea of the deformity of sin, was one of the reasons which occasioned his sweat of blood, and the mortal agony he suffered in the garden of *Olives*.

IV. The son of God having therefore taken upon himself to satisfy for all the sins of the world, the greatness and multitude of which he perfectly knew, it is easy to judge with what sense and bitterness of heart he wept for them. For though they were the evils of others, his pain was not mollified on that account ; because his love made him regard them as his own, and he was as deeply touched with them as if they had been of his own committing : besides which, he not only felt in sin those disorders

disorders it had caused amongst men, but much more still the injury which the divine majesty had received thereby, and this made him pass his life in continual sorrow.

Though other children have many reasons to weep at their coming into the world, since they are born children of wrath, and enter into a banishment, far from heaven, and are in danger of losing it, exposed to a thousand evils which end but by the greatest of all, *viz.* death, joined to the uncertainty of a better life: nevertheless as they are born deprived of the use of reason, they are insensible of their misfortune, and know not till afterwards the just grounds they have had for deploring the misery of their condition. But Christ having nothing of childhood, but the smallness of body, and the outward form; and being at the same time the son of *Adam* and the wisdom of God, knew the whole extent of the evils for which he wept; he clearly saw the tyranny of the flesh and the world, the violence and inundation of human passions, the oblivion of eternal goods, an aversion to holy things, the baseness and amusement of earthly cares, the infinite multitude of bad thoughts, criminal desires, irregular words, and the unlawful actions of all men that had lived till then, and that were to live till the end of the world. He knew that his mercy was the only remedy of all those evils, and to which he was engaged by the obligation he had laid himself under of satisfying for the sins of the world.

But nothing affected him so sensibly as the foresight of the small profit of his labours, and the ingratitude of men. He was so penetrated with all these considerations, that his eyes were become two fountains of tears which continually flowed, and spurted up even into heaven, there to extinguish the wrath of God justly provoked against us: for he was not only sensible of the sins of the whole world in general, but likewise of those of every one in particular; so that there is none of us but may regard those divine tears as shed for himself, enjoy them as a blessing which belongs to him, acknowledge that he is the cause of them, and thus dispose himself to receive that grace of remission which Christ has merited for him.

V. God shewed in a vision to the prophet *Ezekiel* a magnificent temple, wherein was a fountain of living water which sprung up to the right hand, and had the virtue of healing all that came to the temple, (*Ezech. xlvii.*) By the right hand we must understand, according to the common expression of the scripture,

scripture, the power of God; and by that fountain, the abundance of good things which are found in the living temple of the divinity, that is, in Jesus Christ our Lord; because in his body, which he himself calls a temple, dwells all the plenitude of the divinity; and at his birth there flowed from his two eyes, as from two salutary fountains, a torrent of living water, the virtue of which was able to cure all our infirmities. We must no longer ask why those that weep are called blessed in the gospel, since they have Christ's tears for their consolation: for this divine Saviour by taking upon himself his children's debts, performs on their accounts the office of a true father; he weeps alone for them, and sends his angels to declare to men the peace and joy which he procures them by his sorrows. Parents labour and give themselves a thousand pains for their children, whilst these children sport and live without disquiet: thus it is that Jesus Christ our Lord and true Father acts towards us; he would have us be chearful, content, and calm, whilst he labours, suffers, and weeps alone for us.

VI. The holy scripture teaches us a great truth, when he says, that *it is better to go into the house of mourning, than into that of feasting*, (Eccles. vii. 3.) not only because the joys of this world are closely pursued by sadness or death; but also because there is commonly found in the midst of excessive joys, a great forgetfulness of God and eternal salvation; and men arrive thereby at such a degree of blindness, that those things which make them weep, are no less shameful than those which rejoice them: they esteem riches, the prosperities of this world, the pleasures of the flesh, and according to the expression of the holy scripture, (*Job xxi. 13.*) *They spend their days in joy and wealth, and in a moment they descend into hell*, where they are undeceived fruitlessly, and weep without consolation and hope. They think themselves unhappy in this life, when they want the means of ruining themselves, when they cannot satisfy their desires, and when they are in adversity, though it be their surest way to salvation: but they deplore not the evils of their soul, the offences committed against God, the loss of heaven, and the danger they are in of eternal damnation.

We see no such thing in the stable of *Bethlehem*; there is nothing in that house of tears, where Jesus weeps, but angelical rejoicings, spiritual delights, celestial favours, and a holy society, composed of *Mary*, *Joseph*, and some poor shepherds; the

they there bewail their sins, despise pleasures, merit heaven, and taste a solid consolation. It is therefore better to go into that house of tears, than into a house of joy.

VII. Tears are commonly signs or effects of sadness; because they are occasioned either by the privation of a good which was dear to us, or by the presence of one which makes us pass in a moment from sadness to joy. The tears of Christ have the same principles: for tho' he cannot feel the want of any good which belonged to him, since he possesses the plenitude of all goods, yet he is sensible of the privation of those we have lost, and of the return of those which we recover in him. Thus is he the companion of our tears, as well of those which sadness makes us shed, as of those which joy occasions us, by the interest and concern he takes in all our good and evil.

It belongs therefore to every one of us to examine the bottom of our hearts, and to see what our inclinations and affections are; that we may judge thereby whether we have any share in the tears of Christ: for a Christian ought to fear nothing so much, as that facility with which he gives way to earthly affections, unworthy of a heart which is made only for God and eternal good things. Hence comes that indolence and false peace, which makes one spend his life calmly in sin, and entirely neglect the purity of his conscience, as if he had never done any thing which deserved to be wept for, or had no reason to fear death and the judgments of God. People even frequently reckon that a happy day wherein they have satisfied their most criminal desires: whereas if men made a little reflection upon the irregular motions of their hearts, and the pain they bestow on the world, vanity, and pleasures, they would find great reason to fear lest Christ had wept unprofitably for them, and lest they themselves should be condemned one day to weep without any fruit for all eternity.

VIII. O how much wiser is the conduct of a servant of God, who living unknown to the world and judging all his joys unworthy of him, mingles his tears with those of his Saviour, tastes those spiritual delights which they produce in this life and expects those which they merit in the other! How much happier is the penitent man, who touched with regret for his sins, joins himself to Christ to weep with him for them, and to obtain through him their remission!

on ! how much more prudent is he, who entering again into his heart, asks an account from himself of his past life, reforms his manners, is employed in the salvation of his soul, returns sincerely to God, gives himself wholly to him, is received to the communication of his love, and tastes that divine peace which is given only to those, who having wept bitterly with Jesus, find a most sweet consolation in his mercy.

CONTEMPLATION

On the tears Christ shed for us.

WHENCE come these tears which thou sheddest in such abundance, O divine infant ! thou who art the consolation of those that weep ? Why meltest thou in tears when thou enterest into this land of sinners, since thou comest hither to make them happy ? The angels make the air resound with canticles of joy ; they declare exceeding gladness to the shepherds, because thou art born ; and they order men to rejoice, because they have a Saviour : 'tis thou, O amiable Jesus ! who art that Saviour ; and there is only thee alone that weepest amidst the rejoicings of heaven and earth. Mayest thou be blessed for ever, O my God ! Thou comest to us with so great a desire of redeeming us, that thou wilt not interrupt the work of our redemption for one moment : thou weepst with impatience to die, forgetting nothing for our redemption ; and because thou knowest that many will water thy feet with their tears in sorrow for their sins, as *Magdalen* did, thou wilt be the first in shedding thine before thy father, to render him favourable to us, and to sanctify our tears by thine. Thou beginnest at thy entrance into the world, to perform by thy tears what thou art one day to perform by thy blood.

II. What shall I render thee, O thou love of my soul ! for all those blessings thou bestowest on me ? Thou weepest like other children, but thou hast other reasons for weeping than they have : they have occasion to weep for the banishment they are beginning, the sin they bring with them, the dangers they are exposed to, and the miseries they suffer ; and thou

they are ignorant of them as yet, nature performs in them what they would do themselves if they knew them. But thou O eternal wisdom! thou weepest because thou beholdest the crimes of all men, the injuries done to thy father, the ruin of souls, their interior and unknown necessities, the errors which blind them, the pleasures which corrupt them, and the habits which damn them. Thou weepest because thou seest the contempt of thy law, the forgetfulness of eternal goods, the negligence of salvation, the love of earthly things, the empire of sin and the devil, the wrath of God, the danger of eternal damnation, the false peace wherein the world lives amongst so many subjects of fear, and the impossibility we are in of finding any remedy besides thee for all the evils which encompass us.

III. But because we find in thee that only, sovereign, and true remedy, thou wilt have the earth to rejoice at thy birth, and heaven, which is to be filled with men whom thou comest to save, to partake in that joy. Thou alone wilt be weeping, whilst we enjoy the merit of thy tears; they proceed abundantly from that heart, wholly burning with charity, to heal the wounds and melt the ice of mine: make those divine tears, O fountain of heavenly blessings! flow into my heart, that it may be healed, softened, and purified. I adore thee, O divine love! O immenseness of goodness! O infinite mercy! I adore thee, O lamb of God! who takest away the sins of the world: I adore that care and eagerness thou hast for procuring me so efficacious a remedy.

How well has the prophet *Isaiah* described thee, by saying, *Take away the spoils speedily, quick take preys*, (viii. 1.) since being unable to wait till the age of speaking, thou already carriest away by thy tears, the heavenly treasures, the mercies of God, and a thousand spiritual graces, for sinners. O divine spouse of my soul! O charitable father of this unhappy sinner, thou hast good reason to say, that *the companions of the bridegroom cannot mourn so long as the bridegroom is with them: but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast, and mourn*, (*Matt. ix. 15.*) because they are deprived of his sight: for when he is present, he takes care to provide for the necessities of his family, and to comfort it by his presence whilst the children take their diversion and rest under the care of their father. Thus it is, O divine Jesus! that at thy entrance into the world thou wouldst have us be in joy, whilst thou

thou weepest for us, and that we should abandon the care of ourselves to thee, whilst thou alone labourest in acquiring us eternal good things.

IV. But thou not only beginnest thy life by weeping, thou God of my soul! thou continuest it in the same manner, and those tears are only to end by the death on the cross. Thou wilt pass days and nights in prayer, with thy countenance bathed in tears, and the very ground where thou shalt pray will be watered therewith; thou feelest my evils, as if they were thy own, and thou beggest for me the blessings of heaven as if they were necessary for thyself. Although thou shouldst never suffer any other pains, will not those tears, shed for bewailing evils which thou committedst not, and those sighs thou sendest forth for meriting us the remedies which thou needest not, suffice to convince me of thy love and to draw mine to thee? O inexhaustible fountain of mercy! why am I not melted in tears, and burnt with the love of thee? Is it possible that I should let thee weep alone for the sins I have committed, without mingling at least my tears with thine? O sweet and ardent tears, soften my heart, and make mine flow in abundance; that I may assist you in washing away my sins and be inflamed with the love of my Saviour.

Since there was nothing in me, O eternal wisdom! which could engage thee to succour me, but the necessity I was in of lamenting all my life; how great is my blindness to run after the pleasures of the world, without any sense of my misery? Enlighten, O divine light! the darkness of my soul, that I may know and hate myself; separate my heart from the love of terrestrial goods which separate me from thee; take from me the relish of all things which hinder me from relishing thee, and which oblige thee to weep.

V. O infinite goodness! always patient in bearing with me, and ever liberal in heaping thy blessings upon me! when should I have been, if thou hadst not had pity on me? When I look back on my past life, I find great occasion there of fear and sorrow, not only on account of those evils which I have never wept for, but even of those which I have hitherto wept for with so much tepidity: for have I ever felt the loss of thy love, O my God! in as lively a manner as I have that of a temporal good or pleasure? I weep for a father, a brother, a relation, a friend, who cannot deliver

me from my evils, and whom I must necessarily lose sooner or later : I lose thee every day by my sins, O my sovereign good ! I deserve to be deprived of the eternal happiness for which I was created, and this loss concerns me not. If a man offends me, if he does not restore me what I think is my due, or if any thing happens to me against my will, I am disturbed thereby both interiorly or exteriorly. I am sensible of the loss of honour and reputation ; I cannot bear without an extreme difficulty that another should be more esteemed than myself ; I spend my life in diverting myself, and flattering my capital enemy ; that is, this material and corruptible body which is the source of all my evils ; if it wants any convenience or pleasure, I am afflicted thereat, so as to lose all repose : and what is still more deplorable, I employ, O my God ! the time thou hast given me for meriting eternal goods, in every thing that may rob me of them for ever ; I am even so miserable that I cannot suffer myself to be deprived of the occasions of perishing, and losing thee at the same time, thou who art my only happiness.

I am weak against temptation, overcome in the least assault, lukewarm, without fervor, remiss in good, bold in evil, without light, without charity, without any desire of pleasing thee, without application to thy service, without a will to suffer for thee, without interior peace, in fine without any good, except it proceeds from thee. But this is saying too little, I am without thee, O the true life of my soul ! I behold myself in the region of the shadow of death, and am unconcerned thereat, neither do I melt into tears before thee. Art thou not, O divine Jesus ! my true father, brother, and friend, the companion of my pilgrimage, my comfort, my treasure, my glory, and my sovereign felicity ? Why then am I not ashamed to weep for temporal misfortunes, and to be insensible of the misfortune of losing thee ? O tears of an infinite price ! supply the weakness of mine, and obtain me those blessings which you merit.

Put an end to my misery, O Lord ! and permit me not to remain any longer in the blindness wherein I am. I have already sacrificed a great part of my life to earthly cares, what have remaining thereof is not too much for meriting heaven. May I begin at least now to serve thee, O my God ! I am touched with regret for my sins, and I sincerely desire to weep for them with thee. But it belongs to you, O powerful tears ! which open heaven, to open also my eyes for making mine flow.

Wash

Wash away, O sweet tears ! all the spots of my soul ; kindle in me, O ardent tears ! the love of God, and the hatred of myself. O tears which pierce the heart of the eternal Father, pierce mine also ; and since you may make all sorts of blessings descend from heaven upon earth, elevate this earthly heart to heaven. When will the happy moment come when I shall feel in my soul the effect of those precious tears ? let them beg for me, O divine Jesus ! what I know not how to beg for ; hear them, for I deserve not to be heard, and grant me the blessings which they beg for me.

VI. It is true that tears are commonly the effect or end of sadness ; because sadness being nothing else but sorrow for having lost a good which was dear to us, we weep only for the privation of what we love ; and when we recover that good, sadness ends also by tears. 'Tis for this reason that thy servants who ardently seek thee, weep sometimes with sorrow for the evils which separate them from thee, and sometimes with joy for the blessings which thou communicatest to them ; being unable to support without melting in tears, either the sweet impression of thy presence, or the regret of having displeased thee. But thou, O divine Jesus ! what reason hast thou to weep ? Is there any good thou hast not ? Thou thyself art the sovereign good, thou possessest all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God ; and as nothing is wanting therein, so nothing can be added thereto : thus thy tears regard only men, and being rich with thy own goods, thou desirest none but for them. Thou wilt never be satisfied, O devouring fire ! till thou hast transformed into thyself all those souls which thou hast created for thee. But art thou not infinite ? Art thou not omnipotent ? Who then can hinder thee from consuming in me what is displeasing to thee, and from changing me wholly into thyself, that I may please thee ?

VII. Let my tears be my food day and night, till I possess thee, O infinite goodness ! grant that I may weep for the misfortune of having lost thee, and for the danger of losing thee ; fortify me by thy presence, that my enemies may be dispersed. I feel myself touched with the desire of praying to thee, of loving thee, and of wiping off the tears which thou sheddest for me ; but there is something in me which makes thee shed them, and which my blindness hinders me from knowing thou, O Lord ! who perfectly knowest me, and seest the bottom of my soul, heal in it those evils which afflict thee, and give me all those blessings which thou desirest for me. O how well

I now

I now comprehend that it is better to go into a house of tears, than into one of joy; since the tears of this life produce the joy of the other! Thou art born here below, O my God! and thou diest in tears, and 'tis thou who in Heaven wipest off all the tears of the just, whilst those who in this world spend their days in pleasure fall in a moment into hell. I therefore chuse rather a thousand times to go into the stable where thou weepest, than into palaces where the powerful of the world rejoice. There is no pleasure on earth but what is mixed with sadness, and the purest joy that is tasted here, is to weep with thee. The just who spend their life in tears, and sigh incessantly after thee, are filled with consolation; grant, O Lord! that I may be of that small number. O happy moment! wherein, whilst the body is bathed in tears, the soul tenderly embraces thee.

Embrace me, O divine infant! that we may weep together, thou for the love of me, and I for the love of thee; thou wilt convert me, and I shall possess thee; thou wilt comfort thyself with me, and I shall comfort myself with thee. What sweetness dost thou give, and what blessings dost thou communicate to those who weep with thee! O how true it is, according to thy word, that those are happy who weep thus! Remove from me, O divine Jesus! all the vain joys of the earth, that I may sigh and weep in time, in order to have the consolation of possessing thee in eternity.

VI. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

The coldness of the season in which he was born.

CHRIST not only undertook to fight against sin, in order to merit for us the grace and glory which we had lost; but also to leave us examples of virtue, in which we might clearly discover, both the evils that sin occasions us, and the means of avoiding it. Therefore he has particularly declared himself against those vices which are most predominant in the world, and of which the occasions are most frequent and dangerous; and has especially applied himself to the practice of contrary virtues, such as humility, patience, the shunning of pleasures

and of every thing the world most esteems. But because the love of the body, and the care one takes of it, is one of those things wherewith men are most taken up, and which causes the greatest disorders; the son of God at his birth, and through the whole course of his life, treated his body in such a manner, that those who have the desire and fortitude of dying to themselves, find in him continual examples of mortification; and those who have not the courage to ill-treat themselves, discover at least how much they ought to fear a domestic enemy, that is able to make them lose eternal happiness.

One of the conveniencies of the body, in which many employ the best part of their life, is that provision of cloaths, and a thousand means which they daily invent for defending themselves against the inclemencies of the weather and change of seasons, or for feeling less what they cannot wholly avoid. We must add thereto magnificent houses, commodious apartments, gardens, woods, waters, moveables, an elegant table, music, and an infinite number of other pleasures sought after with so much care, to hinder the sense of every thing that may incommode the carnal man. But as there is nothing to be expected from an enemy too well used, but treason and rebellion, the holy fathers, instructed by the divine spirit, have invented, for preventing this disorder, that simple and common life which is led in monasteries, where retrenching all luxury and superfluity in lodging, eating, and cloathing, they content themselves with what is necessary, and have frequent occasions of mortifying the body and senses. Many have even retired into profound solitudes, where they lived without houses, cloaths, and human food; others spent their lives in continual fasting; and some have lived on the tops of pillars exposed to the heat, cold, and inclemencies of the weather, and they were all as diligent in refusing their bodies those very things that were necessary, as worldlings are intent on procuring them what are superfluous.

II. Christ was pleased not only to be born naked like the other children of *Adam*, but also in an inconvenient place, in the severest season of the year, at midnight, trembling with cold, and deprived of all manner of help. He did not change in process of time that seamless garment which his blessed mother had wrought him with her own hands, but wore it until his death on the cross. During his hidden life, he had not, in the poor house where he dwelt, wherewith to defend himself, either against the cold or heat; and when he began

to converse with men, the ground was his ordinary bed: he was very frequently exposed to rain, wind, and snow, to the heat of the sun, and to the dew of heaven; and after thus spending the day, he retired in the evening upon a mountain, or into a garden, there to spend the night in prayer; and notwithstanding he was the master and creator of times, he had distinguished the seasons for the profit of men, and at that time foresaw the inconveniency he was to receive one day from thence. Thus in procuring us a thousand pleasures by the earth's fertility, and that plenty of fruit which the variety of seasons produces, he prepared himself sufferings; for he tasted the agreeable things of the season but very little, and he felt all the rigour thereof.

III. Here the poor find great subject of instruction and comfort: for although they be deprived of a thousand things wherein the rich abound, so far as often to want the most common and necessary, yet they learn by the example of our Saviour, that it is christian prudence to make a virtue of necessity. *St. Chrysostom* affirms that God esteems the disposition of the heart, and the good will of men, above all things; and that he considers necessary sufferings no less than those which are of our own choice, provided we join love and resignation to the necessity of suffering, (*Serm. de amore Dei, &c. tom. 5.*) The opinion of this father is founded on a very solid reason; for though I cannot avoid those evils, yet nevertheless they come from the hand of God who sends me them, and consequently requires me to receive, and suffer them. Thus he looks upon my acceptance of sufferings, as a service I do him, as a submission to his order, and as a fulfilling the good-will which he inspires me with.

If the poor had the spirit of God, they would esteem themselves happy for being in the same state which Christ was in, who being born amongst *Jews*, many of whom were both poor and rich, preferred to their company that of *Mary, Joseph*, and some shepherds who were poor. What an advantage is it for all those that are so, to be able to unite their poverty to that of their Saviour, and render it meritorious by his? But the virtue which proceeds from necessity is so precious in the sight of God, of what value will that necessity be which comes from virtue? Certainly those voluntary poor who fill the deserts and religious houses, refuse themselves whatever is superfluous, and treat their bodies so severely, will find in Christ, not only the example, but also the strength of

accomplishing what seems impossible to nature: for love, as St. Peter Chrysologus says, (*Serm.* 147.) pleads no excuse concerning the difficulty of things; and the more difficult they are, the more courage it has for undertaking them.

Hence it is that some holy women of whom *Palladius* speaks, after living a long time inclosed within four roofless walls, being asked how they had been able to bear so severe a prison, answered that they were so charmed with the beauty of their spouse, that they had little feeling of what they suffered for loving and pleasing him. If worldlings knew the spiritual delights which God makes those taste who quit the world for him, they would have a great contempt for the pleasures of the body: but because this truth is comprehended much better by example than words, it is sufficient to mention here, for giving a faint idea of the happiness of the saints in this life, that they live more content in poverty and suffering, than worldly men do in the midst of abundance and pleasure; and that they would not change a single moment of the pain which they endure with Christ, for all the joys in the world.

IV. There are some persons in the world, who are neither so irregular as to seek the conveniencies of life to the prejudice of their salvation, nor so fervent as to resolve to leave all things with a design of pleasing God: and although what we have said does not regard them so directly as those who aspire to christian perfection, yet it is certain that they find in Christ's austerity a great subject of consolation for them, and powerful reasons for loving him; for he has so much goodness towards us, that even when he walks before us, and gives us such bright examples of the severest mortification, he does not oblige us to practise it in that degree of perfection: and whilst he refuses himself all things in order to merit for us eternal blessings, he permits us the use of temporal conveniencies, provided they destroy not in us the love and obedience which we owe to him. Therefore although those whom we speak still allow great liberty to their senses, if they frequent the sacraments, practise the virtues proper for their state, and prevent the care of the body from making them abandon that of the soul, God may raise up children to *Abraham* from those stones, roses from those thorns, and fruit from that barren ground.

They have also a means of drawing down the mercy of God upon themselves, by being confounded in his presence, by comparison

comparing their delicacy with the austerity of their Saviour: begging his pardon for their remissness, and grace to avoid whatever may destroy his love in them: for Christ loves us so affectionately, and esteems the humility of heart so much, that our good desires often make him excuse our defects.

V. Our first father was condemned after his sin to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, that is, that he could not live but with an extreme pain, in labouring much, and reaping little, from a land which produces him every where thorns and briars. Christ submitted to the same law in all its rigour: his life was a continual labour through the goodness he had for us; and he drew little profit from his labour because of our malice: he sowed the seeds of life in an ungrateful land, which produced fruits of death and eternal damnation.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ in the rigour of the season wherein he was born.

WHY dost thou not soften the hardness of my heart, O divine tenderness! that I may love and adore the inventions of thy mercy! How canst thou suffer my soul to remain cold and frozen in the midst of so many flames as surround it on every side? Permit not that fire, O Lord! which devours thee to be wholly employed in thyself, make some sparks of it fly unto me, where it will find matter to exercise its activity upon; that is to say, a great deal of hardness to mollify, many sins to destroy, and several imperfections to consume. I adore thee, O divine infant! I love thee with all my heart, O my sovereign good! Thou art great in every thing, always like thyself, and that little body of thine cannot conceal from us the abundance of thy riches; there is nothing weak in thee, but what appears to human eyes. But what wilt thou do, O Lord! when that body is stronger and more capable of suffering, since at a time wherein it ought to be spared, thou treatest it with so much rigour. I behold it trembling with cold, laid on the hard ground, tender and delicate

as

as it is, and yet thy providence interferes not to soften the season, or diminish its sufferings; the B. virgin is so poor, that she scarcely has wherewith to cover thee; the stable is open to every wind; there is no fire to warm thee; and nothing is to be seen in that place but an extreme poverty, and a general privation of all manner of conveniencies.

II. Thou leavest not thy work imperfect, O divine Saviour! after having commenced thy life by suffering, thou continuest and finishest it in the same manner. Thou always lovedst austerity which we so much hate. For how often has the rising sun found thee with eyes livid, and countenance pale, through the coldness of the night? How many times have thy hair and cloaths been soaked with the rain and dew? And how many times has thy most pure body been bathed with sweat in thy labours and journies? Thou knewest, in creating the world, and disposing the seasons, that thou shouldst one day feel the rigour of winter, the heat of summer, and the inconvenience of the winds; thou wast pleased, as one may say, very soon to enjoy thy work, by suffering at the moment of thy birth, the rigour of a very cold night; and thou hast expressed for those sufferings which thou preparedst for thyself, the same taste and eagerness which worldly men have for enjoying the gardens and houses which they have built.

III. O charitable father of our souls! O master of the pure and eternal truth! O faithful companion of poor sinners! how remote art thou from those who perform nothing of what they command others! thou speakest not as yet, and thy works already speak for thee. Thou seest I spend my time in flattering this miserable body of mine, that I am wholly taken up with exterior cares, even so far as to forget interior things, that I obey the desires of the flesh even with the danger of losing thee, and that I live in the arms of so formidable an enemy, without refusing it any thing of what it desires. I know by my own experience how unprofitable all the endeavours are which I use for satisfying it; the more I give it, the more it requires of me; the more I spare it, the more untractable it is; and in order to recompense me for my complacency to it, it separates me from thee, O my sovereign felicity! it abases my soul to every thing that is most gross and unworthy of it; and it cannot suffer me to serve thee in prejudice of its own pleasures.

How

How many reasons have I here to bewail and deplore my own misery ! thou seest the depth of it, O Lord ! have mercy on me, and chastise me not in thy wrath ; thou alone knowest my interior state, and the evils which the slavery of this body occasions my soul to suffer. Although I should weep all my life, there would still remain a thousand things to be wept for ; and what pardon soever thy goodness grants me for the past, I have always reason to tremble for the future.

IV. Assist me therefore, O Lord ! against myself : thou knowest what I have to fear, for having given to the care of my body the time I ought to have employed in thy service ; and how I ought to blush with the remissness wherewith I have sought thee, when thou preventedst me with thy grace : for have I ever done as much for thee, O divine Jesus ! as worldlings are wont to do for their bodies ? They observe no bounds in the luxury of cloaths, magnificence of houses, and search of conveniencies ; they grudge no expence for removing every thing from them that might give them pain ; they refuse nothing to their carnality, whilst the poor, the widow, the orphan, and thy altars, O my God ! are neglected, and want the most necessary things ; and as for me when I return to thee, drawn by thy grace, and when thou comest into my soul, what a reception do I give thee, what an abode do I there prepare for thee ? with what purity do I receive thee therein, O infinite goodness ? so patient in bearing with me, and so easy in pardoning me.

Although one single moment of those divine sweetnesses which thou makest them feel that love thee, be infinitely more precious than all worldly delights, yet the men of the world take a great deal more pains for those false pleasures, than I do for the true ones ; my soul is so penetrated with sorrow and confusion for it before thee, O my God ! that it is only capable of a profound silence : have mercy on thy poor creature, for whom thou hast so much goodness. I labour continually for my body, and scarce do any thing for thee ; my miseries are proportioned to my wicked heart, which is as expanded for evil, as it is small and contracted for good : but the greatness of thine, O Lord ! appears in suffering for me, in loving and pardoning me, in taking no notice of my sins, and in accommodating thyself to my weakness : for thou obligeest me not to do every thing thou dost ; thou permittest me to take a moderate care of my body, and only requirest me to love thee.

V. O when

V. O when will the time come when the ardour of my love shall supply the languor of my body, O divine love! that canst do all things, make thyself the master of my heart, and work thy wonders therein. Give me, O Lord! an absolute empire over my body; and if I cannot suffer so much in my flesh as thou sufferest in thine, inspire me with so insatiable a hunger after justice, that I may at least have the desire of doing much for thee, whilst thou dost much for me. Take from me all superfluity, and teach me to give this enemy only what is necessary: turn all my thoughts towards thyself, since they are profitably employed on nothing but thee: take thou care of what concerns me, that there may no further care remain to me than that of loving and pleasing thee. What can I desire besides thee, O my sovereign good! and what shall be wanting to me if I am happy enough to possess thee? O lost years! O life ill employed as that which I have spent at a distance from thee! Thou art the only repose of my soul, the true remedy of my evils, and my sure remedy in all my pains; why then art thou not sufficient for me? Open this heart, sound the depth of its corruption, and heal its inveterate wounds; for in fine, O Lord! such as I am, I am thine; and since I am already thine by justice, make me also such by love.

VI. But permit me to ask thee here which torments thee most, the cold occasioned thee by the season, or that which thou beholdest in my soul? Every thing speaks in thee, O Lord! teach me to hear and obey thee. I plainly perceive that thou endurest the rigours of winter for expiating my delicacies, and that thou endurest them joyfully to pierce this tepid heart with the darts of thy charity. Alas! what will become of me, O infinite mercy! I do not remember to have spent so much as one hour of my life in the fervour of thy love. Thou sufferest cold and heat, as a traveller does who hopes to refresh himself when he is arrived at his own home; and when thou comest into my heart, to repose therein as in thy own house, thou wouldst gladly find in it affection, sweetness, and peace. O that I always received thee with a pure love! that I should never reject thee by my tepidity!

Thou dost nothing, O my God! but what thou dost for me: thou hast created me for thyself, and hast given me a heart which cannot find its repose in any thing but thee; thou wilt be the centre of my desires, and it seems thou hast put me in this place of banishment only to make me sigh after thee.

But

but since thou ordainest me to support the fatigues of this life, in view of the end whereat I am to arrive; permit me not, as a traveller passing over a dry and barren country, to stay by the way. Ah Lord! thou preventest my desires; I already feel thy presence, and find thee within me; comfort therefore my dejected soul, fortify it, and tell it thyself that thou art its salvation and sovereign happiness.

If I seek thee at any time without finding thee, and if thou delayest to come to me; it is that I may desire thee more ardently, and have a better relish of the sweetness of thy presence afterwards: for thou wilt establish in me, thy abode, thy repose, and thy delight. If thou findest my heart frozen against thee, or possessed with another love, thou art deeply concerned thereat: but when the place is vacant, or ready to receive thee, thou thinkest thyself well recompensed for all my sufferings. How many times hast thou knocked at the door of this heart, and I have not opened it to thee, O eternal beauty! How many times have I banished thee from thence after having received thee. How many times have I chose rather to lose myself, than to possess thee? Why do I live, O my God! if I live not for thee? Put an end to my misery, O Lord! and since, in spite of all my repulses, thou still triest to enter into my soul, grant that thou mayest be received therein, and never depart from thence.

VII. Come, my hope and salvation! drive out those usurpers who have taken possession of thy house, kindle therein the fire of thy love, shut it up against every other but thyself, and suffer nothing to go into it against thy will. Especially, O Lord! be diffident of me; for thou knowest that in thy presence, I am always rich in promises and desires; and that out of it I become remiss in thy love, and slow to execute what I have promised thee. Do thy work, O Lord! in spite of my resistance; for I can have no good but what comes from thee. Let not the designs of thy goodness be traversed by my malice; re-establish what is destroyed, restore me what I have lost, glorify thyself in thy creature, reign in thy own kingdom, dwell in thy own house, and never permit me to be separated from thee, who art my God and sovereign felicity.

VIII. Thou didst condemn *Adam* to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, and often to gather nothing but thorns, where he had sown good grain, and thou, O my God! who art the new *Adam*, our true father, and who hast no sweeter food than

than the love of our hearts, although thou knewest they would produce thee thorns, yet thou hast not ceased to sow the seeds of eternal blessings therein. Thereby thou hast undergone the punishment of our first father, with this difference that he suffered for his own sin, and thou sufferedst for mine.

But, O Lord! what advantage canst thou draw from our love? Pardon me, O my God! I desire perhaps to know too much, and it is enough for me to be assured that thou desirest to be loved. If thou requirest nothing else from me, why do I not love thee? Thou bestowest a great favour on me by loving me, thou grantest me a great one by desiring me to love thee; and I know not which of the two is the most advantageous for me. O love! that lovest so tenderly, and forgettest nothing for making thyself be loved, what hinders thee from accomplishing what thou desirest? How can I love thee without thee? Thou commandest me to love thee, give me what thou commandest me, and command me what thou pleasest. Burn the briars and thorns which choak in my soul the good grain thou sowest therein; open this earthly heart, plant the divine love in it, warm its tepidity, and possess it entirely; but open thy treasures at the same time, O eternal love! for thou canst do whatever thou wilt.

O mother of God! most pure abode of the word incarnate, you who have received him within yourself after so gracious a manner, obtain of him for me what he requires of me, since you know there is no salvation for me but in him alone. Blessed spirits, citizens of the heavenly *Jerusalem*, most pure hearts wherein God reposes for ever, remember that you were once as we are now travellers on earth, cast your eyes upon the dangers to which we are exposed, and beseech the Lord that I may one day become his abode for all eternity.
Amen.

VII. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

His Circumcision.

CHRIST was pleased, soon after his birth, to begin the shedding of his blood; and to give us, as one may say, the first-fruits of that which he was to spill in abundance for our remedy. Therefore on the eighth day of his life, according to the command which God had given of old to *Abraham*, he submitted himself to that law whereof he was the author, though he had several reasons for dispensing himself therefrom. For, in the first place, it had been established as a public profession of the faith of the *Messias*, whom the *Israelites* expected. Now Christ being himself this promised and expected *Messias*, he could not expect another, nor consequently be obliged to shew by circumcision the faith and hope he had in him.

Secondly, it was the mark of the covenant which God had made with *Abraham*, whereby he had engaged himself to acknowledge *Isaac's* posterity for his people, and they were to have no other God but the God of *Abraham* and *Isaac*; the other nations having been rejected because of their idolatry. But Christ that good shepherd, being come to reunite all the nations of the world without distinction in one and the same fold, and to save all men who should live and die in his faith and love, needed not to bear the character of a contract which he was to change afterwards, in order to extend it to all nations.

Thirdly, the circumcision of the body obliged the *Israelites* to cut off the hardness of their hearts, and all affections contrary to the love and law of God. But Christ being of an infinite purity, and coming to purify the world, had nothing to cut off in himself, so that command regarded not him.

Fourthly, as it was a sacrament of the old law, whereby, in making profession of believing and hoping in the *Messias* who was to come, they were delivered from original sin; so that sacrament supposed the sin whereof it was the remedy: but our Saviour, being the author of grace, the remission of sins, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and

and consequently impeccable both as God and as man, was no less exempt from the obligation of bearing that character of a sinner, than he was remote from all sin; and it was an extreme humility in him, to vouchsafe to subject himself to a law, established for healing an evil so incompatible with his sanctity.

II. The divine love, which finds no obstacle invincible was pleased to shew the greatness of its power, by submitting God himself to a law so unworthy of his majesty. God is so great that he cannot increase; and his greatness appears less in doing great things, than in abasing himself to little ones. Therefore Christ has testified a greater love to us by subjecting himself to our miseries, and to the humbling actions of our humanity, than by working the wonders of his power. This ought to confound a certain kind of pride so common among the children of the age, who are not afraid of committing most grievous sins in the sight of God, and fear to pass for sinners before men. Hence it comes, as St. Bernard says (Serm. I. *de circum.*) that they have no shame for the evils of their soul, but have it for the remedy which can cure them. Christ desiring to destroy in us, by his example, this unreasonable and unjust inclination, observes a quite contrary conduct: for though there is nothing in him but truth, purity, and sanctity; yet he conceals all these perfections under the appearance of sin: he is circumcised, as if he was a sinner, and he takes the remedy of an evil which he has not, to teach us that he cannot be confounded, who passes for a sinner, and is not so; but that he who is a sinner, and appears not such is always contemptible in the sight of God.

III. It appears that we owe a particular acknowledgment to Christ for having borne the pain and character of a sinner, in his circumcision; for in the other mysteries of his life and death there always shone thro' the appearance of sin, for the ray of the majesty which was hidden in him. When he was born weeping and shivering with cold, like the other children of Adam, the angels, the shepherds, and the wise men came to adore him. When he was presented in the temple as a sinner, the holy old man Simeon and Anna the prophetess, published his divinity. When he was pleased to be baptised in Jordan with sinners, the H. Ghost who appeared upon him in the form of a dove, the voice of the eternal father which was heard, and St. John who baptised him, declared that he was the son of God. When he suffered himself to be tempted

he desert, the angels came to serve him as their Lord and master. And when he was awakened and oppressed with fatigues, his miracles manifested his power.

When he permitted himself to be seized in the garden of *Olives*, he by one word overthrew those that were come to take him. When he was fastened to the cross between two thieves, the sun which was darkened, the earth which quaked, the loud cry which he himself sent forth at his expiring, the centurion who confessed him, and the veil of the temple which was rent, gave all so clear a testimony of his divinity, that even those who had crucified him returned from thence striking their breasts, and acknowledging that he was truly the son of God. And so in all the occasions wherein he had appeared as a sinner, there was always something that discovered his divinity.

There is only his circumcision wherein he seems to have forgot himself. There appears in it neither angels, nor miracles, which can discover what he is; because he was pleased at that time to taste in its whole extent the pleasure he had in seeing himself like us, and to oblige us thereby to become like him; and though he afterwards endured greater pains, yet this ought not to be less precious to us, since he subjected himself thereto for love of us, so far as entirely to forget his own greatness.

IV. Though circumcision had had no other pain than that of the flesh, Christ would have submitted himself thereto for that only reason: for he came into the world with so great a desire of suffering, that it was not easy for him to moderate himself, nor to confine himself to suffer only what other children suffer. Nevertheless that pain must have been very sensible, because circumcision was made with a knife of stone, according as *Moses's* wife had practised it in regard of her children, and as God had commanded it to *Joshua* for all the people, before they should enter into the land of promise. Common children suffered it without knowledge, which diminished their sense of it; but Christ, who had at that time his perfect reason, felt in a lively manner the pain of that wound, and shed that little blood with the same love, which made him pour it out upon the cross even to the last drop.

V. God had ordained in the old law, that the first-fruits of the product of the earth should be offered him: and because his

his son was to be born in so great a poverty, that he should have nothing of his own, not even a place where to lay his head, the eternal father required the first-fruits of the blood of that well-beloved son; our Saviour submitted himself joyfully thereto, and nothing could hinder him from suffering for us in so tender an age: for on the eighth day of his life he gave us the first drops of his blood, which was all entirely to be shed upon the cross, and to flow also after his death by the opening of his side.

Behold what Christ has done for those who pass their first years in ignorance, their youth in disorder, and the rest of their life in a shameful attachment to their bodies. O what great subjects of confusion would a man, enlightened by the divine light, discover here, for having so ill requited Jesus Christ, who spent no day of his life without labouring for our salvation, and expressing his love to us.

VI. It is not without reason that our Saviour was pleased our salvation should cost him so dear: his design was to make us comprehend how much more he esteemed us than every thing else which he had created. The creation of man cost him no more than that of an emmet; he made all things by the sole motion of his will, without care or labour; and he would have been but little concerned at the loss of other creatures: therefore, if he has done and suffered so much for preventing that of man, it was that we might be sensible how much he loved us; and that if our creation was so easy to him, our redemption cost him infinitely dear. 'Tis for this reason that St. Paul affirms we are obliged to sacrifice our bodies and souls to his service, because we *have been bought with a great price*, (1 Cor. vi. 20.) It is true he could, if he had pleased, have redeemed us for less: but what was sufficient for our salvation, was not sufficient for his love; and nothing less was requisite for satisfying this, than a laborious life finished by the death of the cross.

St. Cyprian adds, that God was not willing to redeem us at a small expence, lest the facility of the remedy might augment our liberty of sinning: for we are so inclined to evil, that if Christ had suffered less for delivering us from thence, we should not have sufficiently comprehended the danger which sin draws us into; and if after every thing our Saviour has endured, we still sin with so great a facility, what should we have done if he had not shewn us, by the greatness of his labours

labours and sufferings, how much he hated sin? Let every one therefore examine what the disposition of his heart is, in regard of so many disorders committed without shame or caution, considering at the same time that our Saviour did not spare his infancy, and that a death full of sorrows and reproaches was necessary for satisfying his desire of our salvation.

VII. Children had their names given them in circumcision: for this reason Christ was pleased that his holy name, which signifies a Saviour, should be written, as one may say, upon his flesh, with that very blood which he was one day to shed for our salvation. St. Bernard affirms, in conformity to the holy scripture, that this name was not given him then for the first time, but that he had brought it with him from heaven, and it was only declared in circumcision; because Christ being essentially the salvation of the world, he was to bring at his birth a name conformable to what he was. Men commonly bear names which agree not with them, since they are not truly what those names signify. The names of riches, treasure, majesty, greatness, and excellency cannot suit those to whom they are given, because they have not really those qualities: but Christ is the true salvation of our souls, he has by his own nature every thing that the name of Jesus signifies, and was pleased that this name should be published on the first day of his shedding that precious liquor, which was to be the cure of all our wounds.

VIII. The prophet *Isaiah* (viii. 3. ix. 6.) had given him the names, *Hasty to take away the spoils, Emmanuel, Admirable, Counselor, God, Strong, Father of the world to come, Prince of Peace*, and several others which are included in the name of Jesus, and are only explanations of it. For in order to be truly a Saviour, he ought to be earnest in drawing souls from the power of the devil, from the tyranny of sin, and from the darkness of blindness; he ought to be a God conversing with men, the master and author of an admirable doctrine for dissipating all our errors; he ought to make peace betwixt heaven and earth, to be the father of eternal life, to open the gates of heaven, and to reign with the elect in all future ages.

IX. The Son of God has expressed much more love to us, by taking this name, than we can imagine. God was pleased of old to be called *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, his faithful friends, that he might honour them thereby, and in them all their posterity: but the Son of God seeing he had scarce any

any friends left in the world, took his name from his own enemies, whom he designed to gain to his friendship; and in the same manner as God honoured some of his servants, by joining their name to his, our Lord was pleased also to honour all men; and to regard them as his friends, how great sinners soever they were, by causing himself to be called their Saviour.

Moses can no longer glory in being the only friend of God, because he beheld him face to face; nor all the patriarchs, because they treated familiarly with him; God has granted us a much greater favour, when he vouchsafed to cloath himself with our nature, to live as a sinner amongst us, to die between two sinners, and to be called our Saviour in heaven and on earth. His name is thereby become terrible to hell, glorious in the world, adorable in heaven, sweet to the just, salutary to sinners, our safety in dangers, our rest in labour, our help in need, our hope in this pilgrimage, our support in fear, our comfort in sadness, the source of all our blessings, and the remedy of all our evils.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ in his Circumcision.

NOW is the moment, O divine Jesus! wherein thou art going to begin to satisfy the desire thou burnest with of shedding thy blood for sinners. Make me enter into that furnace of love, that I may behold therein the fire which consumes thee, and the earnestness wherewith thou expectedst those first pains which thou art to suffer for us. I owe thee no less, O Lord! for the love and joy thy heart feels on that account, than for the punishment thou endurest, and the profit I receive from thence. Where can we find, O my God! a love like thine? O that my heart was going to thee, as thou art coming to me! But, alas! I have delayed my conversion so long, I am always remiss in thy service; and eight days appear so many years to thee through impatience of suffering for me.

me, and of giving me the first-fruits of thy blood. Here thou employest neither violence, law, nor threats, for bringing me to thee; and though the law of circumcision binds not thee, yet thou submittest to it, because it is a law of suffering, that thou mayest shew me that law of love, which renders thee the victim of sinners.

II. Break thou with love, O my heart! for a God so full of goodness; be thou opened and dilated, that I may receive him. Thou findest nothing difficult, O my God! when thou art to express thy love to me; the tenderness of thy age, the greatness of thy majesty, and the severity of a law which was not made for thee, prevent thee not from doing it. The greater, more independent, and absolute thou art in thyself, the more amiable thou appearest to me in humbling thyself for me. Thy love is the only law thou followest; thou dost everything, because thou lovest; and thou sufferest, because thou lovest. But, Lord! who is he whom thou lovest? Thou seest nothing in me that is worthy of thy love, unless my sins draw down thy compassion, and give thee reason to shew the infinite treasures of thy mercy towards the greatness of my misery.

III. It was not enough for thy love to become man, to be born an infant, poor, weeping, and subject to our miseries; thou wouldst also appear a sinner, and receive in thy most pure flesh the remedy of sin, though sin be so remote from thee, that if thou wert capable of sinning, thou wouldst not be what thou art.

But if thou hast such an abhorrence of sin, how canst thou consent to pass for a sinner? It is the deformity of sin which renders hell so dreadful; it is the stain which it makes in our souls that causes us to lose heaven, and renders us the objects of thy hatred. Whence comes it then, O my God! that being holiness itself thou sufferest, and seekest the form of a sinner, not only by being born in the flesh of *Adam*, the first of all sinners; but also by submitting thyself to a remedy which thou ordainest only for the expiation of sins? Thou wouldst be circumcised, though thou institutedst that sacrament only that sinners in receiving it might declare their faith in thee, and obtain by that acknowledgment the remission of original sin. It was thy will that their protestation should be made by shedding of blood, because thou hadst not yet shed thine. But thou, O infinite purity! who art the true *Messias*, by the

faith and love of whom we are saved; who art thyself the salvation of sinners, what need hadst thou of the remedy of sin? I love thee, O infinite love! I adore thee, O immense goodness! and I bless the incomprehensible designs of thy eternal wisdom.

IV. Thou hatest sin, but lovest the sinner; and thou vouchsafest to suffer his punishment, though thou hast no share in his fault. Thou hast taken my sins upon thyself, that thou mightest incur the chastisement which I deserved, and thou hast more regard therein to my remedy than to thy own glory. Thou art so high, O my God! that no evil can reach thee; so pure, that sin cannot defile thee; and so holy, that the figure of sin cannot hurt thee; but though it be infinitely distant from thee, yet nevertheless thou hast taken it upon thee. What hast thou found in me, O infinite love! to love me to that degree? As thou hast done all things of thyself, 'tis of thyself also that thou lovest with so much excess: it is for thy own satisfaction that thou descendest to what is most abject and humbling: thou wilt appear what thou canst not be, that beholding thee become like me by love, I may comprehend what thou art and how much I ought to love thee.

V. O God of love! who penetratest the bottom of my soul, how many labours didst thou suffer for enlightening such profound darkness, for humbling such a foolish pride, and for making me return into the good way? When I see thee so great on one hand, and humbled on the other, even to my low condition; then it is I comprehend that neither less power, sanctity, nor love, were necessary for raising me up and healing me. Enlighten my eyes, that I may behold myself in thee. O mirror of divine goodness! that in seeing thee I may humble myself, in humbling myself I may please thee, and in pleasing thee I may obtain a new light, which may discover to me that my happiness consists in being wholly possessed with thee, as thou art wholly sacrificed for me.

If it be a great mark of love in thee to be willing to appear a sinner, though thou canst not be one; is it not an insupportable pride in me to be willing to be a sinner, and to be unwilling to appear such; to love my wounds, and to be ashamed of their cure; to be destitute of every virtue, and to wish that people would think me virtuous? Destroy in me, O Lord! all these contradictions. I cannot deny but sin is shameful, since I blush to appear a sinner; and yet I am as earnest in

committing it as if it was honourable. I am ashamed to be punished lest I should pass for a wicked person; and I am satisfied with myself when, by offending thee, I accomplish my own will. I am ready to recover with my blood the honour people deprive me of, when they say of me what I really am; and my greatest care is to be in effect, what I cannot bear to be called by others. O strange blindness! O deplorable disorder! I love the evil which destroys me, and I hate the acknowledgment of it which would heal me. I give way to the love of sin, that I may taste the pleasure of it; and I feel the hatred thereof only because I fear its remedy. There is as much evil in hating sin thus as in loving it: for I love it in order to commit it always, and I hate it in order to love it longer.

VI. This disorder produces another, which is no less unreasonable. I believe with a firm faith that thou art my sovereign Lord, and that thou beholdest me. I know by experience that men who see me are weak and miserable. I am persuaded that I may be condemned to an eternal punishment by thy ever equitable judgment, and that the judgment of men, how unjust soever it may be, cannot hurt me but for a short time. I know that I am truly what I am in thy sight, and not what I appear to the eyes of men. I know also that I cannot, with all my disguise, make myself better than I am: and with all these knowledges I blush not, O my God! to be in thy sight what I am; and I seek to appear before men what I am not, against the very testimony of my own conscience.

I cannot however conceal from myself the corruption of my own heart, though I let others see nothing but a plain and regular exterior: I affect ways full of chastity, and am full of impure desires; I desire to be thought humble and modest, whilst a secret pride rules over me; I hide under the mask of a holy and disinterested zeal, an unmeasurable ambition; in fine I cover my vices with the appearance of virtues; and all these wounds are so much the more incurable as they seem to be healed.

I speak not here of that deplorable time, when I was abandoned to vice and my irregular inclinations, so far as to have no longer any shame of sin, and to make a jest of those who quitted it; when I gloried in my miseries, and prided in my infamy: I was deaf to the truth which condemned my
G 2 delusions,

delusions, rebellious to the light which illuminated my blindness, and without fear or respect for every thing that could retain me in my duty. If I was at any time obliged in quality of a christian, to have recourse to sacred remedies, I did not pluck up the root of evil from my heart, I left the principles of perdition therein, and was so miserable that I loved the earth better than the salvation of my own soul.

VII. O divine patience! who knowest all the miseries I confess before thee, who hast them present when thou sufferest for me, and who already preparest thyself to bear with me, to expect me, and to receive me: it would seem thou despairest of ever seeing me consent to the cure of my evils; and lest they should occasion my death, thou takest already the remedy of them. What love, what acknowledgment do I not owe thee? Let my soul! O Lord! be absorbed in the ocean of thy mercies: but how shall I do, since it is already plunged in the abyss of its miseries? Nothing strikes thy ears more quickly than the voice of my sins: moved by such cries, thou formerly destroyedst whole towns and nations, and didst precipitate millions of sinners into hell; but now, O my God! thou deliverest us, thou takest upon thee the punishment we have deserved, thou lookest upon us with goodness, thou pardonest us with mercy, thou helpest us with love, and thou unitest us to thyself so far as to be clothed with our nature, that we might be saved by thy merits.

Is it possible, O divine Jesus! that thou art punished for me, and that I should still remain guilty? O paternal bowels! have mercy on this prodigal child. O divine purity! cleanse this leper. O eternal life! raise up this dead body. Let a drop of that precious blood fall upon me, that all thy creatures may glorify thee, in beholding in thee, by my conversion, so great a power concealed under so much weakness; and that they may know that notwithstanding thou appearest a sinner, thou canst change sinners into saints, and make the poorest and most miserable become in thee the richest and most happy. Sanctify us exceedingly, O Lord! because thou sufferest and lovest much: Thou hast said that *many sins are forgiven to one that loves much, Luke vii. 47.* Since therefore thou sufferest so rigorous a punishment to make me feel the sweetness of thy love, infuse that love so abundantly into my heart, that all my sins may be pardoned.

VIII. No, Lord! thou wouldst not have taken the name of *Jesus* with so much pain, and in shedding thy blood, if thou wert deaf to the voice of my misery: thou wouldst, even before thy birth, have an angel declare that thou shouldst be called *Jesus*, because thou wast to forgive sins. Behold here a sinner at thy feet, O my Saviour! If thou sufferest on the eighth day of thy life, that thou mightest be able to suffer longer, and if thou already takest the name of *Jesus*, that thou mightest labour immediately in our salvation, begin with me, O amiable *Jesus*! I will no longer ask thee any thing, thou knowest the necessities of my soul, do what thou plearest, thy holy name is sufficient for me, with it I will go whithersoever thou wilt; I will write it upon my eyes, upon my ears, upon all my senses, and in my heart: I shall thereby be formidable to hell, terrible to the devils, known to heaven, and thou thyself wilt acknowledge me by this mark. Thou wouldst not be my Saviour, if I were not a sinner, and I cannot be a sinner unless thou art my Saviour; for what means *Jesus*, but a Saviour! thou art *Jesus*, because thou art a Saviour; and thou art my *Jesus*, because I am a sinner.

Sing forth, O sinful soul! the mercies of *Jesus*, be no longer afraid of any creature, nor even of himself. O sing with love, whilst he is in the manger, for thou shalt weep when he is on the cross! Speak not to him now of thy sins, only say to him in singing forth the glory of his holy name, O sweet *Jesus*! O amiable *Jesus*! O divine *Jesus*! O *Jesus the most beautiful of the children of men, the desire of the eternal hills, and the companion of my pilgrimage*! O *Jesus* my father, my friend, my Lord, my king, and my all, repose thyself in my heart which sighs after thee, and burns with thy love. 'Tis true it is the heart of a sinner, but thou art my Saviour. Ah, Lord! my strength fails me, my voice is weakened in thy presence, and since I cannot speak, let my love speak for me to thee, or rather speak to me thyself O my God! and make me hear thy voice in silence.

O mother of *Jesus*! how rich are you with *Jesus*! Enrich my poverty with the treasures which you possess in him. O blessed Inhabitants of heaven! O celestial court of our Saviour, who enjoy the fruit of his labours, and whose felicity consists in beholding him, receive me into your company, that I may see him, and possess him with you for all eternity,
Amen.

VIII. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

His flight into Egypt, and Herod's persecution.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ instructed men for the space of thirty years by his example only: he concealed his heavenly doctrine from them during that time, because he was to publish it to the world in the last years of his life. He did thus, that the evangelical truths might be more convincing; that those which offend nature and the senses, might become sweeter to us; that the falsity of the maxims of the flesh and the world might appear more clearly; and that our slothfulness might be more inexcusable. For lost man being unable to return into the way of salvation, but by the imitation of God his creator, whom he saw not; God, according to the observation of St. *Augustin*, lib. 7. *de Trin.* c. 3. became man, that man might have at the same time a man whom he could see, and a God whom he could follow: but because works have much greater efficacy than words for persuading to virtue, God being become man, took thirty years to practise in, and only three to preach in. It was not agreeable to the quality of our Saviour to be one moment without fulfilling the duties thereof; for that reason he began his work in his infancy, and at that time gave us examples directly opposite to the false maxims of the world.

II. The commonest source of the errors and false maxims established in the world is, that men, when they begin to know themselves, follow that road which they find the most beaten, and approve or condemn what is approved or condemned by the multitude; they then cast their eyes upon the whole sequel of their lives; form to themselves projects of honour, establishment, ease, and pleasure; propose to themselves the satisfying their senses and passions, and pleasing the powers of the world; and think to bring a lawful excuse for this conduct, by saying the state wherein they are engaged, is improper for virtue, and that they must live like others. Hence comes that tepidity in the love of God, disgust of religious duties, forgetfulness of God, and many other vices wherewith their life is filled. All these evils turn at last into such a habit, that they are no longer sensible of them; and this obduracy is the source of an infinite number of sins, and the

the foundation of reprobation. For tho' the way which leads to heaven be furrounded with a thousand dangers of one's being lost, there is none greater than to begin one's life with that entire negligence of salvation; because it gives room to our enemies, who never sleep, to lie in wait for us, and to do us very great mischiefs, before we are aware of them.

III. Hence it is that Jesus Christ, the mirror of eternal truth, has given us examples of virtues so contrary to those first disorders, even before the age that others begin to make use of their reason. He was not yet two years old, when he left his country and the help of his relations, tho' they were necessary to him in so tender an age; he would be transported into a place of banishment, and exposed to *Herod's* violence, who persecuted him without knowing him.

The entrance of the wise-men into *Jerusalem*, enquiring where the new king of the *Jews* resided, gave occasion to that persecution: for Christ being born at *Bethlehem*, made choice of shepherds among the poor, and of wise-men among the rich, to have himself adored; but he called the poor, who are less taken up with worldly cares, by the voice of angels; and the rich, who are commonly more remote from the kingdom of God, by visible signs to which they were accustomed: for as the wise-men delighted in the stars, and professed astrology, he sent them a star, that they might follow its motion with more ease. Thus it is that God commonly acts in regard of us; he accommodates himself to our inclinations; makes use of what he finds in us for drawing us to himself; and, as a charitable father knowing the weakness of his children, makes use of all things for saving us.

There appeared in the heavens a new star, different from others by its matter, situation, and motion: for it was not formed of a celestial matter, but of air or fire; nor fixed in the firmament, but suspended in the midst of the air; and its motion was not from west to east, like that of other stars: though it was much less, it appeared greater, because it was nearer the earth; it was so beautiful and brilliant, that it gave an inclination of knowing what it signified; and Christ joining an interior light to the splendor of this star, the wise-men comprehended that there was born a king in *Judea*, to whom divine honours were to be paid,

IV. As they had not yet penetrated far into the designs of God, they began their journey without any other view than to seek that new king in the capital of that kingdom, where they expected to see great marks of rejoicing. Our Saviour permitted them to find nothing answerable to the idea they had of his temporal greatness, but to have some difficulty even of finding himself, that their enquiry making known his coming upon earth, men of good-will might be excited to search after so great a blessing, and others to awake from the deep sleep wherein they were buried. Thus the wise-men being entered into *Jerusalem*, found every thing therein so cool and quiet, that the new king was not so much as spoken of, whose star they said they had seen in the east.

Herod, who was a stranger, reigned then in *Judea*, according to *Jacob's* prophesy, who had foretold that the *Messias* should come when the scepter went out of the house of *Judah*; and the people who groaned under the tyranny of that *Idumean* prince, were so far from thinking on the happiness which was to happen to them at that time, that they were even troubled for fear lest that new king, whose birth the wise-men published, might be to *Judea* an occasion of war and misery. But no body was so struck as *Herod* with that news, and with the questions asked by the wise-men through the city of *Jerusalem*, concerning the place where the new king was born: for he knew, by his commerce with the *Jews*, that they expected the *Messias*, as the author of their liberty from oppression; and he was afraid lest the rumour which was spread about might be the beginning of his ruin: however he dissembled his uneasiness, received the wise-men with great expressions of joy, and consulted the most learned among the *Jews* concerning what the scriptures said of the *Messias*, under pretence of desiring to hinder the wise-men from being deceived. The doctors of the law answered, that according to the prophecy of *Micheas* v. 2. the ruler of *Israel* should come forth out of *Bethlehem*, but they suppressed out of fear or flattery the following words which proved the divinity of the *Messias*, and consequently the unprofitableness of *Herod's* precautions; and his coming forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity.

V. *Herod* resolved at that time to put *Jesus* to death in the cradle, and by that means to prevent without noise, the misfortunes wherewith he thought himself threatened. He took great care to cover his wicked designs with an appearance of zeal and religion; and as he confided not in the *Jews*,
whose

whose interest it was to please him, he resolved to have private conversation with the wise-men. He interrogated them concerning the manner, time, and other circumstances of the star they had seen, and concerning the reasons which obliged them to come in search of that new king: he lamented that he was not so happy as to discover in his own kingdom what they had known at so great a distance, desiring them to repass by *Jerusalem* in their return from *Bethlehem*, that they might impart to him what they had found, and telling them that he would make himself ready, whilst he expected them, to go with his whole court and pay his homage to so great a king, and that he would have him brought up in the royal palace of *Jerusalem*, with all the splendor that was due to his dignity.

The wise-men departed therefore for *Bethlehem*, without suspecting any thing of *Herod's* true intentions, or being accompanied with any one either from the court or city; because that whole people was blind and negligent in the thing in the world which was most important to them. When they were gone out of the city, they saw the star again which preceded and conducted them at last to the place where Jesus was. At the noise of their entrance the B. virgin took her son in her arms, as it were to preserve her treasure, and the wise-men interiorly illuminated prostrated themselves to the ground to adore the divine majesty, concealed under the weakness of an infant, and presented him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But God against whose designs the malice of men cannot prevail, advertised the wise men in their sleep, not to return to *Jerusalem*: they went therefore to their own country by another road, full of consolation, and deceived the false prudence of *Herod*.

VI. Whilst that prince expected the wise-men's return, and was employed in other affairs of his state; by a particular disposition of divine providence, several days were past, during which Christ was presented in the temple, and carried to *Nazareth*. Not that *Herod* had changed his design; but that he was persuaded its execution did not require haste, and that he should always find occasion of ridding himself of that new king, who could not for a long time be of age to dispute the crown with him. The eternal father, knowing the thoughts of that ambitious prince, sent an angel to St. *Joseph*, to advertise him in his sleep, to retire into *Egypt* with the mother and her child, and to remain there till further orders.

The

The divine revelations which happen in sleep, are commonly accompanied with such a light as renders the things revealed as certain, as if we beheld them with our own eyes. Wherefore the patriarch *Jacob* having seen during his sleep that mysterious ladder whereon the angels ascended and descended, says with so much certainty at his awaking, *indeed our Lord is in this place, how terrible is this place!* Gen. xxviii. 16. And thus St. *Joseph* after that revelation doubted not a moment of the divine will, but arose immediately, and went away at midnight.

VII. It is easy to be observed from all we have said, how soon Christ begins to suffer the persecution of the world; and to teach us that we ought to be as strangers on the earth, who having no fixed abode, sigh continually after the eternal mansion of the heavenly country. The principles of a worldly life destroy all the foundations and hopes of eternal life: for this is founded on the moderate use of perishable goods; we are permitted to make use of them, but not to enjoy them; and being wholly taken up with the term of our pilgrimage, we ought only to take them in our way, and for necessity alone: whereas the foundation of a worldly life is to be attached to what passes away, as if it were to endure forever, in a profound forgetfulness of God, and of a better life. Hence it is that St. *Paul* gives such great commendations of the faith of the antient patriarchs *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. *For their faith*, says he, *they dwelt in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tents——for they waited for a city having foundations; whose builder and maker is God——confessing that they were pilgrims and strangers in the land——they desired a better, that is to say, a heavenly one, which was so agreeable to God, that he was not ashamed to be called their God.* Heb. xi. 10, 13, 16.

VIII. Travellers are contented with little, and seek not those places they pass through, that abundance they would find in their own country. The origin of the sins of men, and of their attachment to the earth, is their being desirous to make their country of the place of their banishment, and to establish themselves here below as if they were never to depart from hence. Christ was pleased in his infancy to suffer the pain of banishment, the inconveniencies of a long journey, the poverty of his parents who wanted necessary helps on the road, and were obliged to live by their hand labour in a strange country: although their fatigues and indigence were great.

greatly mitigated by the presence of such a son, yet nevertheless they were extremely painful to the body and senses.

IX. The powers of the world persecute Jesus in his infancy, so far as to endeavour to deprive him of a life so precious and so necessary to the world; and Christ returns them nothing but weakness: he suffers in silence, permits his enemies to undertake against him whatever they please, and even conceals the splendor of his majesty, that he may be capable of suffering their violence. He could easily have withdrawn into heaven during the time of his hidden life, but he chose rather to be subject on earth to all the inconveniencies of a troublesome banishment, to teach us to separate ourselves from the world; and to consecrate by his presence the deserts of *Egypt*, which were to be one day a retreat of so many saints.

Thus it is that God draws good out of evil, and that the very sins of the world become the instrument of those graces which its Saviour bestows upon it; and yet worldlings cannot suffer him; they seek to put him to death when he commences life; they persecute him unto death, and when Christ, dying for them on the cross, expresses his want of some refreshment in the excess of his pains, they present him only with gall and vinegar. Behold what the world is which we serve so carefully, and to which we sacrifice our own salvation: O what strange blindness!

X. Christ shews us clearly by his example, that the prophet *Jeremy* had reason to say, that *it is good for a man, when he bears the yoke from his youth.* In the midst of the misfortunes of the world he shall sit solitary, and hold his peace; because he has lifted himself above himself, *Lam. iii. 27, 28,* and despising the earth, he has applied himself betimes to the contemplation of celestial goods: in this sense it is that the holy spouse says to her bridegroom: *all fruits, the new and the old, my beloved, I have kept for thee, Cant. vii. 13.* that is, I have given thee the first years of my life, as well as the last. *David* also protested to God that he did not delay his service till the weakness of old age. *I will keep my strength for thee, O God! Psalm lviii. 10.* It is the part of true wisdom to fill one's life with merits, by the exercise of christian virtues, and labours suffered for the love of God. Now it is very difficult for a disorderly youth to be succeeded by a holy old age.

XI. But

XI. But Christ before he retired into *Egypt*, would be offered in the temple to his eternal father, and receive his blessing. This was to shew that we ought to offer ourselves to God with our Saviour, and consecrate ourselves entirely to his service.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ's vocation of the wise-men.

I WILL raise up my hope and desires to thee, O my Lord and my God! the remedy of my wounds, and the light of my darkness, because I find in thee whatever I can desire. My soul cannot conceive the immense blessings which it may hope for from thee; it hopes for much, but it comprehends not this much it hopes for; it hopes for all, but this all is above its thoughts; it hopes for infinite blessings, but it knows not the extent of them. Thou art still greater than that much, O thou God of my soul! richer than that all, and more incomprehensible than that infinite. When I lift up my mind to thee, and desire to have thoughts worthy of thee, I find thee without comparison greater than all the greatness and immensity that I can imagine. I seek no longer therefore to comprehend how great thou art, for it is not in my power to do it; but I presume to desire and hope for that abundance of blessings and greatness which I cannot comprehend.

It is enough for me, O Lord! to believe that however great thou art, thou art mine, and that I am the servant and creature of that boundless majesty and greatness. O that my littleness and nothingness were swallowed up in that abyss of thy infinite essence! O that my blindness were absorbed in that splendor of the divine light! O that my ignorance were drowned in that ocean of eternal wisdom; O that my desires were plunged in that fountain of life, my tepidity in the fire of love, and all that I am in what thou art, O my God and sovereign good! It is in thee alone that I shall find the comfort of my miseries, the light of my eyes, and the pardon of my sins; it is by thee alone that I shall be purified, healed, instructed, and brought unto thee.

II. As thou art every where, O Lord! it was easy for me to find thee, if my sins had not put so great an interval betwixt thee and me; but I have removed myself from thee on one hand, and thou hast departed from me on the other. Thou art so great, so pure, so holy, and so high above me, that I shall never be able to come to thee, if I am not drawn thither: *for no one can come to thee according to thy own word, unless thy Father draws him.* John vi. 44. How then shall I be able to see thee in such great darkness, without thy light? How shall I be able to love thee amidst so much tepidity, without the fire of thy love? How shall I be able to raise myself up to thee from the profound abyss I am in, if thy power supports me not? and what shall nothing be able to do about him who is the source of all being? Draw me therefore to thee, O Lord! since it is for that end thou art come upon earth.

Thou beheldest my wandering, and thou camest to put me again in the right road; thou sawest me ready to perish, and thou camest to save me, thou observedst me flying from thee, and thou camest to call me back; thou perceivedst me incapable of coming to thee without thy help, and thou camest down to seek me, O my Saviour! my way! my truth, and my life! I am that miserable and wicked wretch, destitute of all good, oppressed with weakness, wholly covered with the wounds of sin, and chained down by its wicked habits; and to compleat my misery, I discover not the deplorable state I am in, I am insensible of my own misery; I remain without fear in the midst of vanity and deceit, I am continually wallowing in the mire wherein I am plunged, and whilst I am forgetful of myself, thou art wholly taken up with me, O my God! thou art full of love for this sinful soul, and thou perpetually thinkest on the means of bringing back this strayed sheep.

Thou wast no sooner born, than thou calledst the poor shepherds, and sent a star into the east to the wise-men to conduct them to thee. Thou wouldst not be one moment on earth without seeking us, without drawing us to thyself, without enriching us with thy blessings, and without us with thee; neither wilt thou be content till we are there for ever.

III. Thou waitest not for my loving, desiring, and seeking thee first; thou stayest not for my beginning to serve thee, and meriting some favour from thee; thou makest no account of what thou shalt find in me; and because thou knowest thou shalt

shalt find no good in me proceeding from myself, thou furnishest me with every thing from thyself, by exciting me to consent and co-operate in good for which thou givest me such powerful helps. Thou lovest me out of pure goodness, drawest me without violence, and only requirest me to receive thee and allow myself to be drawn. Now if I were not deaf to thy voice; if I were at least the second in loving, since I cannot be the first; if I had docility enough to follow thee, since I have not strength to seek thee; if I permitted thee to act; if I would not set myself against what thou requirest of me, I should immediately be agreeable in thy sight, and such as thou wishest me to be.

Thou calledst the wise-men, O divine light! by the brightness of a material star; but at the same time thou excitedst them by an interior motion to seek thee; and tho' thou wast hidden under the figure of an infant, wrapped in swaddling cloaths, and in a poor house, thou taughtest them to discover thee and to adore thee as their Lord and God. It was there that they lost all earthly thoughts, elevated their desires, consecrated their love to thee, submitted their mind and liberty to thy law and service, and regarded thee as their treasure; and that thou begankest in them, as in the first fruits of the Gentiles, to take possession of the souls thou camest to seek on earth. Thou calledst them, O Lord! thou conductedst them, thou taughtest them thy secrets, thou satisfiedst all their desires, and filledst their hearts with joy and consolation.

IV. What thanksgivings ought we not to render thee, O my God! for all the blessings thou bestowest on us, even when we are most unworthy of them, and think least of them. How often have I felt my soul awaked by thy light, and warmed with the fire of thy love? Then I approach thee, I find thee, but, alas! I lose thee instantly after. Sometimes I hold thee, I embrace thee, and thou escapest from me immediately. Often when I think myself agreeable to thee, I dread I am rejected by thee; and in this continual change of interior dispositions, I take sometimes one road and sometimes another, that I may meet at last with that which leads to thee. But because I have but little light, I walk in darkness, and often go astray, for want of knowing the way I ought to follow; I desire, and know not how to desire: I love, and neither know how to love, nor how to find what I love.

Thus

Thus my soul loses by degrees, the hope it had in itself, without ceasing to hope in thee; and it knows by its own experience that it desires much, and is unable to do any thing. Thou see'st its trouble, O Lord! and thou seemest not to take notice of it till that happy moment, when fatigued with so many vicissitudes, it falls at last into an entire diffidence of itself: then thou openest its eyes, and it begins to see the true way to peace and life. It knows that thou wast nearer it than it imagined, and how easy it was for it to have found thee; it sees, I know not how, but without any doubt, that thou callest it to thee; thou instructest it all at once, without voice or words, it thinks only on what possesses it, abandoning the care of its body and using it only with contempt and severity; it advances continually, and finally arrives at thee, without perceiving its motion. It then possesses thee, and still seeks thee; and the more it seeks thee, the less it comprehends thee. If thou commandest it to enter, it obeys; and if thou requirest it to depart, it forsakes thee not. It sees, without knowing what it sees; it hears, and is ignorant of what it hears; it knows only who he is whom it hears; and because he whom it sees falls not under the senses, and he whom it hears speaks to it without any voice, it contents itself with loving him, and it loves him continually more and more. Words cannot express, nor the mind comprehend what love receives from thee, O my God! even in this place of banishment.

How happy is that moment, O divine Jesus! how pure is that light, how ineffable is that communication of thy blessings! Thou knowest, O Lord! how precious that gift is, and thy creature that receives it, knows it also. Ah! if it were faithful, if it never departed from thee, if it knew how to preserve the grace it has received, how happy would it be! and yet that is but a drop of that infinite ocean of blessings which thou art one day to communicate to it.

V. O soul of my soul! what is my soul, and what good can it have, when it possesses not thee? O life of my life! what is my life, when I live not in thee? Is it possible that my heart is capable of possessing thee, of enjoying thee all alone, of extending and dilating itself as much as it pleases in thee, and that it can nevertheless be so full of miseries out of thee? Can thy creature elevate itself thus above itself, to repose in thy arms, and after that depart from thee, bury itself in the earth, and forget the blessings which thou communicatest to those that love thee? O divine love! who canst and wilt impart

part the merits of thy suffering to all men, thou placest thyself in so many different states only to accommodate thyself to their different tastes; can one approach to thee without being inflamed? who can hinder thee from doing what thou pleasest, or oppose what thou dost?

Fill every place therefore with stars, O Lord! if they are necessary to us for finding thee? Send thy angels throughout the world, if we stand in need of them for coming to thee; but rather, come thyself, O divine Jesus! into our earthly hearts; shew thy light to our blind spirits, discover to our wandering souls the beauty of thy countenance; give vent to that fire with which thou art consumed, that its sparks may fly every where, and that we may be kindled therewith. Of what use is free-will to me which thou hast given me, if I employ it not in loving thee? Ah! Lord, I know not what I ought to say to thee: but hear the voice of thy love and of my misery live always in me, and let me live perpetually in thee and in thee, as I live only by thee.

VI. Unhappy is that sinful soul that has seen thy light, and plunges itself again into its own darkness; that has felt the heat of thy love, and resumes its former coldness; that has received the pardon of its sins, and commits new ones; that has been prevented with the blessings of thy sweetness, and the attractives of thy beauty, and falls back again into a forgetfulness of its sovereign good, sinks into the mire, and returns to its vomit! O divine beauty! that bearest with these horrible ingratitude, that expectest me, callest me, and still preventest me: I deplore before thee, in the bitterness of my soul, all those fatal relapses which I feel myself guilty of.

It is with justice that thou deliverest me up to my enemies, vices, and passions; and that thou permittest me to be punished and confounded by every thing that has separated me from thee; since after having been introduced into the cellar of thy delicious wines, I have sought to quench my thirst in the muddy waters of creatures. I was unwilling to remain in thy house, and by a just judgment, I am now obliged to beg in strange houses, where I find nothing that can satisfy the hunger I endure. Since I have fled from thy sweet embraces O thou spouse of my soul! it is but just that I should be under the feet of my cruellest enemies: since I have been faithless in preserving what thou gavest me, thou justly refusest me what I beg of thee: I cry, and thou hearest me not; I call thee

and thou answerest me not. Nevertheless, O Lord! in spite of all my perfidy, thou art always my faithful friend, and the good shepherd of this wandering sheep: for thou hast not yet precipitated me into hell, nor abandoned me to the rage of devils; thou hast not condemned me to be eternally separated from thee, neither hast thou quite forsaken me; mayest thou therefore be blessed for ever.

I ask thee not for those singular favours thou grantest to thy faithful servants; I only beseech thee, O my God! not to turn me out of thy house, but to receive me still into the number of thy domestics, and to give me rather for constant food only my tears, till I am as pure as thou desirest me to be, till my interior eyes, disengaged from that thick cloud which obscures them, begin to behold again the serenity of thy countenance, and till thou sayest affectionately to my soul, *I am thy salvation*, thy strength, and thy constancy: then humbled and convinced of its own weakness, it shall seek thee more ardently, and thou shalt be glorified by the return of a prodigal child, by the cure of one that was wilfully blind, and by the change of a faithless servant.

VII. I cast myself at thy feet most miserable as I am: I adore thy divine majesty hidden under the veil of infancy: I consecrate myself for ever to thy service with those holy kings; and I conjure thee, O Lord! to receive me with them. I am poor, and have neither frankincense, gold, nor myrrh to offer thee in acknowledgment that thou art God, king, and mortal man; but I offer thee all thou hast given me, all thou art. I offer thee for my sins the profound sorrow I have for them, and my sincere desire to offend thee no more; I offer thee an acknowledgment with heart and mouth of all the miseries into which I have fallen, for having departed from thee; I offer thee the resolution of satisfying thy justice: or rather, O Lord! take of me thyself all the satisfaction thou pleasest, that it may be more agreeable to thee. I offer thee the three powers of my soul; my understanding, that thou mayest illuminate it with thy light, and eternal truth; my memory, that it may be wholly occupied with thee, and that thou mayest put every thing out of it that can displease thee; my will, that it may be purified by the fire of thy love, and that it may love thee with all its strength. I offer thee the three divine virtues which thou gavest me in baptism; faith, by which I believe in thee, and acknowledge thee for my Lord, my creator,

my Saviour, my God, and my all; hope, by which my heart is carried towards those blessings which I can expect from thee; charity, which makes me sigh after thy eternal possession. I offer thee, O divine Jesus! all that thou art pleased to be for the love of me: I offer thee thy most sacred body, thy most pure soul, and thy divinity which is the source of all happiness and wisdom: I offer myself to thy father by thee; to thyself by thy father; and by thy father and thee to the holy ghost, who is the mutual love of both.

But, O Lord! as thou receivedst the wise-men's presents with their hearts, enlightenedst them with thy knowledge, and preventedst them from returning to *Herod* thy enemy; enlighten me also, O divine light, conduct me, O supreme truth! raise me up again, O increated life! separate me from every thing that displeases thee, drive me not away from thee, but suffer me to remain at thy feet. There it is, O divine Jesus! that I find my happiness, my joy, and my delight; and taste that *peace of God which surpasses all understanding*, Philip. iv. 7.

O virgin and mother at the same time, who drawest from their fountain those infinite blessings wherewith you are filled! bestow some share on this miserable creature, I mean not of the gold, frankincense, or myrrh which the holy kings offered to your son, but of those heavenly treasures which you are the dispensatrix of; may I obtain by you something that is worthy of being presented to him, and that may gain me his love. O celestial court! who surround and incessantly adore that divine monarch, and are always agreeable to him; what can ye ask of him but what will be granted you, since ye behold in him what he is willing to give to these poor banished souls? Obtain from him what is necessary for my coming to him, that I may one day possess him with you. *Amen.*

THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS CHRIST in the Temple,

In the arms of Simeon.

CHRIST was pleased that his most holy mother should accomplish, forty days after her delivery, two laws which had not been made for her; the first was, not to enter into the temple till all that time was expired, during which, a woman delivered of a male-child was reputed unclean; and to offer, if she was rich, a lamb and a turtle-dove for her purification; or else two turtle-doves if she was poor.

The law of *Moses*, which mentioned women in general in exprefs terms, did not regard the B. virgin, who had conceived by the operation of the holy ghost. But after seeing with her own eyes the divine majesty humbled even to the resemblance of sin, she chose rather to imitate the humility of her son and Lord, than to preserve before men the glory of her virginity, because she esteemed the quality of handmaid and imitatrix of Jesus Christ still more than that of his mother.

The other law commands that every first-born male-child should be offered to God, and consecrated to his service on the fortieth day; that in case he were of the tribe of *Levi*, which was sacerdotal, he should be obliged to serve in the temple all his life; and that if he were of another tribe, his parents should discharge him from that obligation, by redeeming him with certain pieces of money: but Christ was not subject to that law, because he was born of a virgin, and the expressions of the law clearly denoted a common birth.

II. Their offering was that of the poor; for though the wise-men had left with the B. virgin gold, frankincense, and myrrh, she had either distributed it all to the poor, that she might suffer the poverty which Jesus Christ was pleased to practise, and which he came to teach men; or if she had reserved any part of it, wherewith she might have bought a lamb, in order to accomplish, by offering it, the whole extent of the law; yet she did not buy any, because she offered the lamb of God, who was her only treasure, for the sins of

the world; and for herself, two turtle-doves or two pigeons. She gave afterwards, for recovering her divine lamb out of the priest's hands, the price which was ordained by the law for the poor, and thus she redeemed the redeemer of the world. Let us not forget to observe here a holy combat of humility and poverty between the son and the mother, in which they both endeavoured to hide what they are, and would willingly appear what they are not. That divine emulation ought to be unto us a great subject of imitation and gratitude, since it comes from the same source of love from whence all those pains proceed which our Saviour endured for us.

III. It is probable that *Simeon* was not one of the priests of the Lord, since the gospel calls him only a *just and religious man, expecting the consolation of Israel*, *Luke ii. 25.* full of years, and weary of life, being supported only by the assurance which the holy ghost had given him, of seeing, before death had closed his eyes, the son of God made man; he went to the temple to wait for the mother of God on the day appointed for her coming thither. He was in a continual expectation, fixing his eyes on the door, to observe all that should enter; for the holy ghost had not yet spoke to his heart: but when *Mary* and *Joseph* entered with the child, without pomp, or any other attendance than that of poverty and simplicity, he was interiorly warned thereof; and what was unknown to the eyes of all, could not be hid from the love which burnt in the heart of that holy old man. When he perceived Jesus, he knew him, and being revived like the phoenix, by the heat of that divine sun, he prepared himself to put off his mortal cloathing: and taking that divine infant in his arms whom he had already in his heart, he began like an old swan to declare by his song the end of his banishment, and willingness to die, since he had seen with his own eyes the light and salvation of the world, after which he had sighed so long.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ's presentation in the temple.

O MIRROR of the eternal truth and divine goodness! O son of the living God! O Jesus my master and Saviour! open my eyes that I may seek thee, with the blessed *Simeon*; that I may see thee, know thee, and embrace thee; and that I may repose in thee as he did. Since thou lovest humility so much, humble my pride; since thou hast chosen poverty, pluck from my heart the love of riches; and since thou vouchsafedst to submit thyself to the law of *Moses*, grant that I may be always perfectly subject to thine. Thou knowest my weakness and sloth, and 'tis for that reason thou requirest so little of me: but thy love, O Lord! treats thee not thus; it dispenses thee from nothing, not even from what appears the most contrary to thy infinite majesty. Teach me, O divine master! that law of love; love yields not to the fear of any difficulties, and when it is pure and true, it finds thee so great, O my God! and so worthy of being served, that its most violent desire is to be consumed in thy service. Every law is sweet to love, and every burthen light, and it esteems itself happy when it can sacrifice to thy greatness whatever is greatest in the world.

But, O Lord! when will the time come, when thy love shall render me humble, meek, poor, and disengaged? When shall I begin to love contempt, to relish my own abjection, and to hate myself; and when crucified to body and soul, shall I be thine as to every thing that I am? Thy most blessed mother is rich by the possession of thee alone; *St. Joseph*, content with serving thee, loves his poverty; the holy old *Simeon* desires nothing but thee alone; and I, O Lord! who believe all this according to the testimony of thy word, and am even sensible of the truth of it, I separate myself from thee.

II. But how can I see my going astray, O divine light! if thou enlightenest me not? If thou wouldst have children offered thee before the use of reason, that when they know themselves they may know they are already thine; how can I desire, O my God! that thou shouldst suffer a miserable creature, to whom thou hast given reason and knowledge of what

what thou art, not to be thine, and to refuse to obey thee? Remedy this disorder, O Lord! by thy mercy. Thou lovest me to heal me, may I hate myself to be healed. Make me feel and deplore the loss of the years of my infancy, during which I neither knew nor loved thee. For though I was not in a condition of offending thee, it is always true that thou lovedst me, and that I corresponded not to thy love. May I still have a greater regret for the first-fruits of my reason and will, which I gave thee not, my negligence in thy service, the forgetfulness of thy benefits and of thyself, the sins I have committed, and the irregular inclinations which I have followed from the time I was capable of offending thee to this present, when I confess in thy presence my shame and misery. But what would it be, O my Saviour! if I were to describe my whole life before thee? if I should reckon the days, months, and years I have spent in sin, and lived without thee, O thou life of my soul!

Here I will cry out with my whole strength, that thou mayest hear me; I will call upon thee until thou answerest me; and will not cease weeping till thou hast pardoned me. I will follow thee every where, O sweet Jesus! I will keep myself close by thee; I will offer myself with thee, by thee, and in thee to the eternal father, that I may be sheltered from his justice under the shadow of thy wings. The lambs offered in sacrifice returned not again to those that offered them, but were separated from them for ever; I will not do so by thee, I will offer thee for me, O divine lamb! but I will either be immolated with thee, or I will bring thee back with me; for I can neither in death nor life be separated from thee.

III. *O father of mercies, and the God of all consolation!* 2 Cor. i. 3. I offer thee thy only son, cast thy eyes upon him, that thou mayest pardon me, and receive me into thy favour for his sake. Have regard to that divine infant, that meek and humble lamb, who offers himself to thee for love of me. He speaks not yet, O Lord! but his heart speaks to thee in my behalf; he presents himself to thee to be the victim of all sinners, and none are excluded from the merit of his sacrifice: he fulfils the law, and pays homage to thee for all. Thou seest, O my God! the fire with which he burns, the pardon which he begs for men, and the graces he merits for them. I offer to thee with him all I am, and all I have; my poverty, miseries, desires, and life with whatever it contains either painful or agreeable; my, body with all its senses; my soul with

with all its powers, and every thing that can be within me good or evil; the good, that it may increase by thy grace; and the evil, that it may be destroyed by thy mercy.

Thy well-beloved son was pleased to begin his life by a solemn protestation of obedience, and to undertake nothing without having first received thy paternal benediction. Permit me, O my God! to beg it of thee, how unworthy soever I am to receive it, and to consecrate myself from this moment to thy service during the remainder of my life. Give me that spirit which discovered to the blessed virgin the counsels of thy wisdom, which conducted the holy *Simeon* into the temple, and which made him know his Saviour: *Create a clean heart in me, O God! and renew a right spirit in my bowels, Psalm l. 11.* which may conduct me to thee. I know how little I deserve this favour; but I offer thee for obtaining it, the infinite merits of that spotless lamb, receive me through him into the number of thy servants; extend upon me the love thou hast for him, and grant me the grace of persevering in thy service unto my death.

IV. Is it possible, O Lord! that thou couldst conceal what thou art in the midst of *Jerusalem*, in the temple? Why is it that all creatures acknowledge thee not, nor come to meet thee with all the marks of joy they are capable of? The sea, and the *Jordan* fled before the *Israelites*, when thou broughtest them out of *Egypt*; the mountains and little hills leaped for joy, and the rocks were changed into fountains of living waters, because they were sensible of thee, O Lord! in the midst of thy people; the most insensible beings were moved at the passage of the ark of the covenant; and yet all those wonders were only the figure of those things whose truth and substance are contained in thee. On this day thou thyself passest through that people, and no body knows thee but the blessed *Simeon* and *Anna* the prophetess. Immortal thanks be given to thee, O my God! for the privilege thou grantest to the humble and to those that love thee. When thou speakest in the temple amongst the doctors of the law, when thou workest miracles in the sight of all *Judea*, thou art not known; and here being a child, poor, speechless, without pomp, and carried in the arms of thy mother, thou canst not hide thyself from those that love thee: they even suffer their banishment only out of the desire of seeing thee, and life seems supportable to them only in hopes of finishing it by embracing thee.

V. O my

V. O my salvation and riches! O life whereby I live, and without which I die! why makest thou a heart which loves thee languish thus? Where art thou, O my sovereign good! O the eternal repose of my soul! thou wilt not allow man to behold thee without dying. Well, O Lord! let me die, that I may behold thee. Why hidest thou from me the beauty of thy countenance? Let my soul feel thee, that all my interior senses, charmed with thy attractives, may abhor every thing that is not thee, and that my heart may continually sigh after thee, O my God: How happy am I when I desire, love, and please thee; and when the desire of beholding thee gives me a disgust of all creatures! For then I discover thee in what state forever thou appearest.

When thou art an infant, I am sensible of thy greatness; when thou art poor, I admire thy riches; and even when thou art crucified, I am charmed with thy beauty. But when my heart departs from thy love, I no longer perceive thee, not even in the wonders thou workest, nor in the splendor of thy majesty. Unite me to thee, O my God! turn away my eyes from vanity, and grant that they may only be fixed on the contemplation of thy eternal truth; discover to this miserable heart that thou art its salvation, and the center of its repose; let me find no joy but in thee alone, who art my true friend, and all the glory of my soul.

Take from me the relish of all earthly things, or give me the knowledge of myself, that I may not suffer myself to be seduced by the false goods of this world, or by my own miseries; but that every thing within me may sigh after thee. Come, O Lord! and delay not thy coming; for all the good things which I desire will come with thee for me. Come, O sweet Jesus! into this sinful soul, break the bonds of its slavery, give it the freedom of thy children, that it may be tied to nothing; but be wholly thine; that it may follow, embrace, and possess thee; and that in possessing thee it may sing with the holy old man this canticle of joy.

An EXPLICATION of the Song of SIMEON.

Luke ii. 29.

Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord! according to thy word in peace.

I LOVE thee, O divine Jesus! and yet am obliged to live at a distance from thee. I spend my life in a continual pain, because I behold thee not, and the desire of seeing thee renders all the sweets of the earth insipid to me; these are false goods which have no solidity in them, and pass away in a moment: nevertheless I complain of their duration, because they separate me too long from my sovereign good. The body enjoys its conveniencies, the senses taste their pleasures, and when they think themselves satisfied, they tell me they have what they desire. But my soul, to whom thou alone art sufficient, O my God! and which esteems every thing else as nothing, continues to sigh after thee with a profound sadness; and this sadness will not end till thou thyself comest to comfort me, who art my true joy.

Deliver me, O Lord! from this obscure prison. Behold the happy moment, now is the hour I have so long desired. I adore thee, O my deliverer and my only happiness! I adore thee, O thou life of my soul! thou hast heard at last the voice of him that loves thee; and since I have found peace, why should I live any longer in the danger of losing it? No, O Lord! I will live no longer, I renounce the earth, since I possess the treasure of heaven; it is time to break my chains, and let me depart in peace from the prison of this body.

II. *Because my eyes have seen thy salvation.*

My soul enlightened with that divine light, fortified by thy presence, and penetrated with the love of its Saviour, has nothing more to desire than to see thee clearly, O my God! to love thee constantly, and to possess thee out of its prison without fear of losing thee. For although my spirit being far distant from thee, and enclosed within this earthly body, is deprived of thy sight, yet it knows that thou alone art its salvation; and charmed with thy eternal beauty, it has nothing but disgust for all things else. Its only desire is to see him

him that heals it, satiates it, fills it with joy, and inflames it. Thou art come upon earth only to kindle in all hearts the fire of thy love.

III. *Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.*

The eternal father has given thee to men, that the just and sinners, the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and all people without distinction should regard thee as their model, master, and light, their glory, treasure, and happiness. And because men could not behold thee, thou becamest man, that we might possess thee in such a manner as agrees with our weakness, and have before our eyes, in our whole conduct, him who is the object of our love, and the end of our desires.

IV. *A light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people of Israel.*

The most obscure darkness is dispelled before thee, O Lord: all our errors are discovered, and we see by the favour of thy light, that divine beauty wherewith our minds are charmed. The people of *Israel* find in thee the accomplishment of those great promises which were made to them, and receive by thee the crown of their glory. All souls by the brightness of thy countenance become brilliant, rich, full of thee, and of thy blessings. Illuminate me, O my light! heal me, O my salvation! exalt me, O my glory! and satisfy me, O my felicity! Let my faith behold thee, my hope expect thee, my love embrace thee, and my soul possess thee here below as much as it is capable of it, waiting till it shall be able to behold thee clearly in the inseparable union, and eternal repose of the heavenly country.

O mother of the salvation and light of the world! by that love wherewith you offered your son to the eternal father for all men, and consecrated yourself to his service, offer me also to his divine majesty, that I may always abide in his house, and never depart from his will; and that during the whole time of my banishment, I may never cease to burn with his love. Blessed spirits who are already received into those eternal abodes, clearly beholding him whom you have desired, and possessing him with certainty never to lose him, give me a share of those true blessings ye enjoy, draw my heart whither my treasure and yours is, that the clouds of this miserable

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able life being dispelled, I may enter into the great day of eternity, there for ever with you to bless that God of mercy, whose vision is the consummation of your happiness. *Amen.*

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ's flight into Egypt.

WHOM dost thou fly from, O Lord! thou who art the master of the world, and the son of the living God? Whither dost thou fly, thou who art the refuge of others, and in whom the guilty find a secure sanctuary against the punishments wherewith they are threatened? Death itself flies before thee, because thou art eternal life, over which his power does not extend. The tyrant flies from thee, because thou art the equitable judge that is to condemn him. Sin and malice fly from thee, because thou puttest them to confusion. The blindness and the dark designs of thy enemies fly from thee, because thou art the light that discovers them; affliction and misery fly before thee, because thou art the consolation of the afflicted, and the strength of the weak. But if it be necessary for thee to fly, O thou God of my soul! come to me, hide myself in my heart, there thou shalt be safe against those that seek thee to put thee to death: they will never believe, by seeing a miserable sinner such as I am, that his heart can be my retreat, and then I shall possess thee without fear; thou wilt pardon me my sins, renew me by thy presence, and enrich me with thy love and spiritual blessings.

II. How deplorable is my state, if the multitude of my sins remove thee so from me, that thou chusest rather to fly into Egypt, than to remain in my heart, O Lord! I plainly see that thou wilt first obtain me mercy by thy sufferings, and endure the pain of banishment for remedying my miseries; but at least, O my God! take me with thee, that I may be the companion of thy exile, and draw from the fountain-head the truth which thou teachest. Thou art the master of the world, and thou livest in it as a stranger. Thou wilt have no fixed abode

in thy own dominion, and thou avoideſt an eſtabliſhment on earth, though it be thy own handy work.

Art thou then, O Lord! baniſhed like me from the abode of happineſs? If thy ſoul is bleſſed, and enjoys the ſight of God, what can it fear here below, and why doſt thou uſe it as a ſtranger? It belongs only to me, O my God! who am baniſhed from heaven to be a ſtranger on earth. I ought not to eſtabliſh myſelf in any place, becauſe I behold thee no where, and I muſt live without any attachment to the goods of this life, that I may not loſe thoſe which thou promiſeſt me in the other. But thou, O Lord, who ſanctiſieſt every thing by thy preſence, haſt nothing to fear, becauſe nothing can hurt thee; thou canſt not be at a diſtance from thyſelf, nor a ſtranger in any place, becauſe there is none but what is thine; and yet thou remaineſt not even in that wherein thou art born: in thy infancy thou undertakeſt a painful journey, and wilt only touch the earth as thou paſſeſt along.

III. Open, O my God! the bowels of thy mercy, and the treaſures of thy patience, to bear with me, and pardon me the errors of my life. For though I feel the inconfancy thereof, I am ſo much attached to it, as if it were to endure for ever.

I am ſenſible in myſelf that I ſhall never find reſt in any thing but in thee; and that, as thou haſt created me only for thyſelf, I ought to expect no true peace out of thee. I behold with my eyes the revolutions of this world, every thing in it in a continual agitation, ſometimes high and ſometimes low, as if it were hurried by the rapid motion of a wheel, and no truth is clearer or more ſenſible to me.

I behold in thee, O thou God of my ſoul! that thou haſt no certain abode in this world: I learn by thy example that thou wouldeſt not have me to fix my heart even upon thoſe goods thou giveſt me; and that however holy and divine they may be, I ought to regard them only as the means of obtaining the eternal bleſſings which thou prepareſt for me. With all theſe inſtructions, experiences, and lights, my heart remains in blindneſs and in the forgetfulneſs of heaven, diſtracted by a thouſand different objects, multiplied by an infinity of cares either unprofitable or criminal; and riveted as faſt to the earth, as if it were the place of its repoſe; how blind, unreaſonable, and ſenſeleſs am I! I clearly ſee thoſe truths,

truths, and behave as if I saw them not. But what hinders me from seeing what I see? and if I see it, how blind am I? Unhappy affection which attaches me to what flies away, possesses me with what passes, and plunges me into those very things which perish daily before our eyes! Thou see'st, O infinite goodness! the misery of this heart combated by itself, filled with contradictions, and justly rent by a multiplicity of opposite errors, because it forsakes the unity of thy eternal truth.

IV. My soul situated betwixt the promises of those unchangeable blessings which it believes, hopes for, and desires; and the perishable goods of the earth, which it searches after so passionately, finds the time too long which it employs, and the trouble too great which it takes, for meriting a repose that will never end; its actions are cold, and its desires languid: not to enjoy earthly and corruptible pleasures, it complains neither of care nor application; life appears short to it, and eternity itself would not appear too long. How many sins arise from thence? how many poisoned fruits are afterwards produced from this corrupt root? How can faith and christian hope subsist with such base inclinations, and such monstrous errors? Thou who knowest them, O Lord! and weighest them in a just scale, see'st the reason I have to doubt of my faith, of my charity, and of my christianity, since my works are so contrary to my belief.

But in regarding this miserable heart, cast thy eyes upon thy own, to find therein wherewith to heal mine. Consider, O divine Saviour! for whom thou hast undertaken this pilgrimage; remember for whom thou labourest. If the voice of my sins is lifted up to demand thy justice, the wounds of this soul which thou hast redeemed are so many mouths crying still louder to beg thy mercy. Why wouldst thou come to abide with me in my banishment, if I could not find in those paternal bowels the remedy of my evils? I cannot be so wicked, but thou art still more merciful. Thou wilt always have more goodness to pardon me, than I have malice to offend thee; and thou art more desirous of granting me mercy, than I can be for obtaining it. Open then, O my God! those bowels of charity to thy poor creature: give to this miserable banished wretch an earnest desire of seeing and possessing thee, and since thou art omnipotent, enter into its heart, turn thy enemies out of it, fix thy love in it, plant therein the tree of life, and pull up by the root all its earthly affections.

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All my miseries call upon thee, O divine mercy! that thou mayest alleviate them: all my desires are directed to thee, O immensity of blessings! that thou mayest fulfil them: all the spots of my soul present themselves to thee, O infinite purity! that thou mayest take them away: and since thou detainest me in this exile in the midst of earthly things, grant, O Lord! that I may know the meanness of them, that I may be sensible of their emptiness, that I may withdraw my heart from them, and that it may no longer have any love or attachment but to thee.

V. Why should I not hope in thee, O my God! when I see thee love sinners so affectionately, and come to abide with them in this valley of tears? When I see thee so earnest in doing them good, that, even when they persecute thee on earth, thou retirest not into heaven, where thou hast a peaceable abode, and an infinite number of blessed spirits adore, love, and acknowledge thee for what thou art; that thou flyest into *Egypt*, because thou wilt purify by the breath of thy spirit that country corrupted by vice and idolatry, that so many holy solitaries who were to come thither after thee, and live there in the purity of thy love, might breathe in it that sweet air and odour of virtues which thou hast diffused therein: that thou mayest be known, loved, and honoured in the very place where thy name was blasphemed, the devil was adored, and sin has reigned so long. Yes, O Lord! thou flyest not so much to preserve thy life, as to consecrate *Egypt*, and to prepare therein the way for thy elect: thou hast obtained for them of thy eternal father the spirit, grace, love and constancy necessary for living holily in those deserts; every one of them was present to thee at that time, although they were not yet born; and they afterwards found in it the virtue which thou hadst merited for them by means of thy love and prayers.

Thou art wholly employed about us and our necessities. O my God! even when thou seemest most at rest: thou art but newly born, and thou enterest already into *Egypt*: thou sufferest there a thousand inconveniencies, where thou art as a worm of the earth, seeking a hole to hide itself in, lest it be trod under foot; and whilst thou remainest there so quiet and unknown, thou plantest poverty of spirit, flight of honours, contempt of the world, silence, prayer, obedience, purity of heart, desire of heaven, relish of sufferings, holy simplicity, the life of pure love, and angelical chastity in a terrestrial and mortal body.

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When thou hast sown that divine seed, which is to produce a great number of faithful servants, elected before all time by thy eternal wisdom, thou wilt return into *Judea*, here to accomplish the mysteries of our redemption, and from hence into heaven, commanding those heavenly blessings to be communicated to the whole world.

VI. But whilst thou thinkest on sanctifying those chosen souls, and inflaming them with thy love, where am I, O Lord! where hast thou left me? Dost thou not compare thy doctrine, *a net cast into the sea, and drawing all sorts of fish?* Matth. xiii.

Wilt thou suffer me, O my God! to swim out of it, thou who knowest I am lost, if I am not in thy nets? O source of holiness! sanctify me; O source of light! illuminate me; O source of all goodness and perfection! change me; O source of being and life! give being and life to this nothing; O source of holy flames! inflame this tepid heart, and consume it whatever is displeasing to thee. Ah! divine Jesus, how weak and contrary to myself am I! desire the good I have not, and possess the evil I detest; but my desire of good makes me not sufficiently detest evil; and my detestation of evil produces in me but a weak desire of good. There is nothing in me but misery, falsehood, and outward appearance. Thou alone seeest, O my God! what I truly am. Heal me, O celestial physician, since thou knowest my infirmity; and grant that I may desire my cure as thou desirest it.

VII. Make me enter, O divine master! into the depth of thy merits. Thou flyest at present from one enemy only, to fall hereafter into the hands of many, who will take away thy life. Thou teachest me to fly from those who persecute me; and yet when thou expressest thy love to me, thou disposest things so, that flying from one cross, I find another more grievous than the former. What means this, O my God! is it not better to suffer present evils, than by flying from them, to meet with greater which we cannot avoid? How little do I know thy designs, O eternal wisdom! and how blind am I in my ways, when I fly from the cross to find rest: for alas! where shall I find it in this life? Why then wouldst thou have me to fly, if in flying I am not to find peace?

If I loved thee, O Lord! I should comprehend the secrets of thy conduct. Thou wilt have man, being a pilgrim on earth, fly continually, to rest no where, and to sanctify his baseness by his patience and love of thee: thou perhaps desirest also

also that I should neither be taken up with what I suffer nor with what thou art to do with me; and that, resigned to thy care, I should have no other than to live without any tie to the earth, to serve thee faithfully, and to suffer myself to be guided in all things by thy providence.

O Lord! who desirest to be the master of my heart, why is it not entirely according to thine? Why is it insensible that thou intendest thereby to deliver it from the slavery which separates it from thee? When shall I be so happy as to be a slave to nothing but thee alone? If thou alone wert my treasure and all my riches, I should live in this exile with the desire only of the heavenly country. In the midst of my friends, I should aspire to thy friendship alone; amongst my enemies thou shouldst be my sole defence: I should be free in thy company in the closest confinement, and a prisoner to thy love, in the most perfect liberty: the cross would seem sweet to me everywhere, because I should be fastened to it with thee, and the less pleasure I should have on earth, the more I should find in thee.

Whence comes it, O my God! that I search here after company and pleasures! Ah! I ought to live in this world only to be crucified in it, to bless thee with my whole heart, to desire thee with all my strength, and to love thee with all my love. Live in me, O Lord! travel in me, and rest thyself in me. May I be always with thee, may I be wholly thine, and may I love only thee!

O most holy queen of angels! to whom no pain was thought troublesome, no pilgrimage difficult, and no country strange in the company of Jesus. Every country with that treasure was your own, every service was sweet to you, every obedience light. You know, O refuge of sinners, that I cannot have any good without him. Be mindful that the fruit of his labours is to acquire many children to himself, to call those back who have departed from him, and to re-unite them that are gone astray. Assist, O mother of mercy! this strayed sheep pursued by a thousand enemies in this valley of tears! bring it back to the flock, that it may hear and follow always in the future the voice of its divine pastor. Ye citizens of the heavenly country, refuse not your assistance to this poor benighted creature, surrounded with a thousand dangers; and obtain, that being disengaged from the earth, it may desire to live eternally with you in heaven. *Amen.*

IX. SUFFER

IX. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

His sensation of the death of the innocents.

CHRIST had retired into *Egypt*; two years were already expired since his birth, and all that time had not been able to calm *Herod's* disquiet. As he had resolved to put the king of the *Jews* to death, as soon as the wise-men had discovered him to him, seeing that they returned not through *Jerusalem*, but had deluded him; he thought they had penetrated into his designs; being confirmed in his former suspicions, his dissimulation was turned into rage, and he took the cruel resolution of causing all the children to be slain, for fear lest Christ should escape him. He would not make use of the *Jews* to find him out, because he did not confide in them; being persuaded they would omit nothing for saving their *Messias*; that perhaps they would substitute another child in his place; and putting but only one to death, would not secure the crown of *Judea* to himself.

Thus after having finished the affairs which had suspended the execution of so barbarous a design, and thinking the noise which had been raised in *Jerusalem* by the wise-men was entirely settled, he reflected on the time in which they had seen the star, and finding it was near two years ago, he contrived a reason for ordering all the children which had been born within two years at *Bethlehem* and thereabouts, to be brought to one place; and when they were assembled there, he caused them all to be massacred by his soldiers, whom he had sent thither, being persuaded that the Saviour of the world must needs be involved in this slaughter.

The whole country in a short time was full of blood and tears. Every place resounded with the sighs and despair of those poor mothers for the death of their children, whose tender age, innocence, and great number rendered the massacre still more horrible.

II. This general affliction was not mitigated, as it commonly happens in other misfortunes, by the multitude of them that were sharers in it; those desolate mothers augmented one another's

another's grief, and spread horror and compassion every where. So unheard-of a cruelty still occasioned a fear for the future, and the terror was so much the greater throughout the country, as they were the less in a condition of opposing the violence of that inhuman prince.

We may sufficiently comprehend what the trouble and consternation was, which such an accident must have raised among the people. The prophet *Jeremy* had foretold, that they *would not be comforted* xxxi. 15. and *St. Augustin* and many other fathers represent in such lively colours, the lamentable cries of those despairing mothers, and the vain endeavours they used for hiding, defending, and saving their children, that it is impossible not to be moved to compassion thereby. It is not without reason that they speak in this manner: for it would have been very difficult to have brought so great a number of children into one place without their mothers, the most part of whom were still at the breast; and it is inexpressible what they felt, said, and did, when they beheld what was dearer to them in the world slaughtered before their eyes.

III. What passed in *Judea* was not unknown in *Egypt* to the eternal wisdom of the divine infant; the voice of the blood which flowed from those little innocent bodies reached him; and his sacred humanity which saw all things in God must have felt at the same time the pain of all the children, and that of all their mothers: for Christ's heart was tender and full of compassion for those that suffered, as it is easy to be observed in several parts of his life.

When the people followed him in multitudes into the desert, he said to his apostles, *I take compassion on the people, for behold they now continue with me three days, and have nothing to eat,* *Mat.* viii. 2. A widow that wept for her son whom they were carrying to his grave, presented herself to Christ near the city of *Naim*, he being touched with her tears raised up her son to life again. He could not behold *Martha* and *Mary Magdalen* weep for their brother without weeping with them. When he entered *Jerusalem* amidst the acclamations of the people who were come to meet him with palm and olive branches, the foresight of the misfortunes of that city caused him shed tears, and to foretell with great sentiments of tenderness the desolation wherewith God was to punish the crimes of its inhabitants.

It appears also from several other places of the scriptures, how sensible our Saviour was of our evils; what then must his compassion have been for so many innocent victims who were sacrificed only on his account? He wished to have died instead of them; and if it had been convenient, he would have consented to have been slain, and come to life again as many times as *Herod* had caused children to be massacred, that he might have given his life for every one of them in particular. But because it was necessary he should live, and reserve himself for a more cruel death for the salvation of all men, his knowledge of the murder of so many infants, and of the grief of so many mothers, whilst he saved himself by flight, occasioned him a most bitter pain. 'Tis true he was to recompense them abundantly some years after for the death they had undergone for him, by the crown of glory which he would merit for them by dying in his turn for them; but whatever he designed to do and suffer afterwards did not diminish in him the sentiment of compassion with which he was penetrated, through the natural goodness of his heart.

Our Saviour's compassion extended still further; and one of his greatest pains during the time of his pilgrimage, was his sense of the evils which the children of *Adam*, banished from their heavenly country, suffered, and were to suffer, though justly; because they were all present in particular to his eternal wisdom.

IV. To comprehend this truth, we need only reflect that the design of God, in creating human nature so perfect, was not that it should be subject to the miseries it suffers; but on the contrary to be entirely free from them, and to attain to the delights of heaven, by those of the earth. He subjected the other corporeal creatures to death and corruption, man alone whom the nature of his body subjected thereto also, was preserved by a peculiar privilege in the terrestrial paradise, from pain, hunger, thirst, cold, heat, labour, death, and from every grievous thing that could befall him. For God was pleased that between the spiritual and corporeal nature, there should be a third, holding as it were the medium, being both angelic and terrestrial, which without being subject to corporeal evils, should participate in the goods of the mind, and be capable of eternal glory. He chose that creature in which he had, as one may say, re-united heaven and earth, that he might work his wonders in it, communicate his divine perfections to it, and make it the paradise of his spi-

ritual delights; but man having fallen from this happy state by his sin, God who was unwilling to destroy him, resolved to save by sufferings, him who had been unable to preserve himself in his pleasures.

V. This obstacle which sin threw in the way of God's designs towards man, would have occasioned God an extreme pain, if the divine nature had been capable of suffering. The holy scripture affirms that God *was inwardly touched with sorrow of heart*, Gen. vi. 6. when he was obliged to punish the world by the deluge; not that he really felt that pain, or that he could repent in time of what he had resolved from all eternity; but, because according to our manner of thinking, he had just reason of displeasure in seeing himself obliged to chastise a creature so severely which he had formed to be happy. But what God could not suffer in his divine nature, he had a lively feeling of in the human, which he had united to himself; he wept in it for all our sins, as if they had been his own; and he bore all the punishment of them, as if he had deserved it.

Thus Christ has perfectly accomplished these two things with respect to us; as God our sovereign Lord, he makes our misery turn to his own glory and our spiritual advantage; as man, our companion, and brother, he feels all the bitterness thereof; and he would subject himself thereto, if he were not obliged to it by the laws of justice and providence. Even when we suffer, he disposes things so, that our pains become more profitable to us than the pleasures would have been which we lost by the sin of our first father; he has also the goodness to sweeten them to us, and bear the greatest part in them, that being sanctified in him, they may be for us a feed of glory. He thereby re-establishes his first design, which was that we should be eternally happy with him, and free from all sorts of miseries.

VI. If we be truly the friends and servants of God, we ought to have before our eyes continually two considerations very proper for comforting us in the evils of this life. The first is St. *Augustin's*, who observes that the holy Church, which began in *Adam* and his children, has always been bathed in her own blood for the glory of her heavenly spouse; that the innocent *Abel*, in the beginning of the world, was washed in his own blood by the jealousy and cruelty of his brother *Cain*; that at the coming of our Saviour, the holy innocents watered

with their blood the city of *Bethlehem* and the parts adjacent; that Christ himself consecrated the Church with his own blood, by dying upon the cross; that an infinite number of martyrs have shed theirs for his love, and that those who died without shedding it, did not die without suffering, because one cannot fight under the standard of a crucified God, nor have a share in his glory, but by the cross.

There are two things in man, which all creatures are unworthy of, and ought only to be given to God alone, the heart and the blood, to love and to suffer. For Christ has raised the value of sufferings so much, that they are become more precious, not only than all earthly goods, but even than the rarest favours of heaven. It is therefore a strange blindness to suffer for the world, and to employ so holy a thing in profane uses, which makes us lose all the fruit thereof, and often serve only to render us more criminal.

David having desired to drink water from the well of *Bethlehem* which his enemies were become masters of; and three of his soldiers having brought him some of it with extreme danger through the enemy's army, when he came to consider how much this water had cost, judged that it ought to be presented only to God; so instead of drinking it for quenching his thirst, he sacrificed it to the Lord, to whom alone we owe all our cares and labours. If men would do so, their sufferings would be sweeter thereby, and they would not lose as they do the best part of their lives. This loss proceeds from their giving to perishable goods a heart which is due only to God, and which God is jealous of that he cannot suffer any thing to share it with him. God requires our love above all things, because love draws every thing else after it; pleasure, thoughts, application, and labour possess the whole man within and without. Thus to give our love to God, who alone deserves it, is to offer him the most perfect, extensive, and agreeable of all sacrifices.

VII. The other consideration is, that God who intended to make his delight with us, seeing his first designs frustrated; and not content with reserving us for the abode of glory, found the means of relishing them by the sweetness of his communications even in our exile. Hence it is that in order to comfort the children of *Adam* for the loss of the earthly paradise, he pours upon them in the midst of their miseries more graces, than they would have received amongst the delights of that

that happy state: for by discovering to them the admirable works of his love, he inflames them so with the desire of pleasing, serving, and loving himself alone, that being as it were inebriated with those divine sweetneses, they are no longer the same; all the pains of this life seem sweet to them, and all its pleasures bitter; and they are no less content in the severest sufferings, than if they tasted the purest joys.

St. *Justin* in his discourse to the *Romans* concerning the faith of the martyrs, says that the chief reason which induced him to become christian from a pagan philosopher, was that cheerfulness which appeared in the countenance of the martyrs amidst fires and racks, being unable to persuade himself that the thing in the world which human nature has the greatest abhorrence of, could be suffered with joy, if some secret and unknown sweetness had not changed such dreadful torments into delights. But that holy martyr adds, that after having embraced christianity, he was convinced by his own experience, that there is no corporal pain, how frightful soever it may be, that can stifle the interior sentiment which Christ gives to those who suffer for him.

St. *Paul* relates his labours and sufferings as so many triumphs; and *David* cries out with admiration: *how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord! which thou hast hid for them that fear thee—thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy countenance from the disturbance of men: Psalm xxx. 20.* that is, thou defendest them, and placest them in safety by the secret knowledge of thy perfections, and by the interior communication of thy blessings. Not that they are sensible of pain, but tempered, as one may say, in an ocean of pure delights which the world is unacquainted with, which eye has not seen, ear has not heard, and which love alone experiences. God is at that time much more glorified by the joy which his servants express in sufferings, that if they had remained in the earthly paradise; and they are no less happy thereby, since pure love makes them a delicious paradise of their own miseries. 'Tis true that this abundance of sweetness is not given to all; but all at least, have this consolation in their pains, that what they suffer for God is advantageous to themselves, and even of an extraordinary merit, when it is suffered patiently. If the labours of this life are not a source of spiritual pleasures to them in time, they are always a seed of glory for eternity.

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ at the death of the innocents.

I GIVE thee thanks, O my divine Saviour! for all those blessings thou hast bestowed on me, not equal to thy deserts, but in such a manner as my tepidity is capable of. Thou art my fortitude and hope, supply by thy goodness what is wanting in my weakness. Thou art my beatitude, the end of all my designs and desires; if I cannot love thee equal to thy amiableness, let me love thee at least according to my capacity of loving thee. Thou beholdest the bottom of my heart, and all the sentiments thou formest therein; but since thou inspirest me with the desire of loving thee, and since nothing is so advantageous to me, grant that I may love thee, as thou wouldst be loved by me. Teach me to esteem the favours of thy love, that I may not receive them fruitlessly. Thy power has drawn me out of nothing, and thy grace has sanctified me in baptism. Thy goodness supports, expects, and pardons me. Thy love occasioned thee to descend on earth, to be the companion there of the miseries I justly suffer. I have nothing, I hope for nothing but what I am indebted for to thy mercy, and I am nothing without it. I labour and am wearied; I go and come, I trouble and disquiet myself for things which are out of thee, which defile, abase, and degrade me, and make me lose thy blessings and grace.

When wilt thou come to the assistance of thy poor creature, O my salvation and only relief! I see myself surrounded on all sides with miseries; above me there is thick darkness depriving me of the sight of heaven; below me the corruption of earthly things; around me the noise and tumult of my passions; before me the vanities of the world; behind me the forgetfulness of true goods; within me the privation of thy knowledge and love; and among so many obstacles which oppose my happiness, I am so blind, as to believe I can live without thee, and not to comprehend the need I have of thy assistance. O my sovereign happiness! out of which I find nothing but evils. O thou life of my soul! without which I live in a continual death. O thou light of my eyes! without
which

which I always walk in an obscure night. Assist my poverty, support my weakness, and enlighten my blindness.

II. Thou knowest that I can do nothing without thee, and therefore thou comest to seek me, that I may find in thee what I find not in myself; thou hast clothed thyself with my flesh that I might have in thee a companion of my pains; thou hast suffered those which were due to me, that I might be less sensible of those which befall me, and to shew in thyself how much greater I had deserved. I adore thee, O my true comforter! Alas! what am I good for to thee, and what advantage dost thou find in comforting me? Am I not treated as I deserve, when I am oppressed with infirmity, sadness, trouble, disquiet, and with all the miseries of this life? Is it not reasonable that I should suffer chastisement, since I have committed the fault; that I alone should be punished, since I alone am guilty? Why then, O divine Jesus! wilt thou share my miseries with me? It would seem that thou art come into the world only to weep, labour, and sweat; to be tempted, persecuted, abused, betrayed, and abandoned; to suffer poverty, banishment, punishments, and death; in a word, all the pains that I suffer, and many others much severer that I suffer not; because thou wilt not only assist me in bearing mine, but also make me sensible how justly I endure them.

How truly, O Lord! has thy apostle spoken, when he said: *we have not a high-priest, who cannot take compassion on our infirmities, but tempted in all things like as we, yet without sin, Heb. iv. 15* and thy experience thereof renders thee sensible of all ours. When thou wast upon earth, the evils which I was to suffer during the whole course of my life, were present to thy eternal wisdom; thou wast touched with them at that time; as a charitable father, thou feltest all the strokes which I was to receive from thy hand, and thou obtainedst me at the same time the grace of profiting thereby according to thy designs. How can I then, O divine pastor of my soul! complain bitterly of thy strokes, knowing the pain they occasion thy paternal heart? Why do I not own how profitable they are to me, by the pain thou hast in striking me?

Ah! Lord, how deplorable is my error! Thou shewest me O celestial beauty! the tenderness of thy heart, and the wisdom with which thy providence governs me; thou discoverest thy paternal bowels to me even in thy chastisements; and thy goodness converts into eternal blessings the temporal evils which

which I suffer so justly. Who is like to thee, O merciful father! The world puts its criminals to death, and goes no further: but thou, O Lord! in crucifying the sinner, feelest his pain, givest him patience, and also rewardest the patience thou givest him with eternal life. When human justice chastises one that is guilty, the unhappy person gets nothing thereby but pain and infamy; but when thou chastisest us in this world, we are immediately recompensed for the punishment we suffer: for by inspiring us with repentance for our sins, thou fillest our hearts with a most sweet consolation. The world dejects us to destroy us, and thou humblest us only to save us. The world loads us to oppress us, and thou loadest us to refresh us.

III. O my God, my strength, my repose, and consolation! why am I not inflamed with the desire of serving and pleasing thee? Thou art not content with comforting me in my pains, and with drawing from them that eternal weight of glory which thou preparest for me; but to shew how liberal thou art towards those whom thou afflictest, thou also makest them love sufferings, and reducest them sometimes to such a state, that they cannot live any longer without suffering. Discover to me, O Lord! those divine secrets; teach me to glory in the cross, and to find what thou hast hidden in it for those that love thee. For whom shall I suffer, O my love! but for thee? When thou drawest me to thee, when I closely embrace thee, and am penetrated with thy love, I am neither sensible of injuries, disgraces, nor poverty, of contempt, perfidy, nor any other pain: all my evils are as it were drowned in thee, and thy presence makes them even sometimes the sweetest food of my soul. What means this, O my God! art thou willing therefore that every thing should become a paradise to me?

But it is thee I desire, O Lord! open my heart and enter into it; or else open me thine, that I may enter into thy joy, love, and knowledge. Thou hast so great a desire of imparting thy glory to me, that thou canst not wait till I am in thy house; thou makest me taste the first fruits thereof in this foreign land, by the sense of thy presence. O divine love! O faithful friend! hearken to my heart, which forgetting its banishment, sings forth in a sweet transport, the triumph of thy mercies: hear it, O Lord! it speaks only to thee and for thee.

O how

O how sweet is my love! how charming is my well-beloved! my soul melts wholly into thee, O my God! it fights only for thee, O my treasure, my sweetness, my hope, and my glory. Ah! my God and my all! O that I might lose here in thee all that is not thee! May thy love live in me, and may I live only in thee, O my God, and my love!

IV. Shew me, O divine Jesus! the excess of thy love and the bitter pain wherewith it rends thy heart. Tell me who suffers most at the death of the Innocents, whether the mother losing their children, or the children losing their lives, or thou O Lord! preserving thine by their deaths? The pain of the mothers exceeds not the bounds of natural love, and that of the children is without knowledge; but thy pain, O sweet Jesus! proceeds from an infinite love enlightened, and burning with the desire of dying for every one of them in particular. Why dost thou permit, O charitable father! so many children to suffer death for saving thy life, since thou comest upon earth only to give life to all men by thy death? Ah, Lord! these are the inventions of thy love; thou sendest to those children what they suffer, that thou mightest suffer the more; they received no wound but what pierced thy heart, and their death is one for thee, because thou diest not for them.

But in order to satisfy thy love and the emulation thou bearest those innocent victims, thou condemnedst thy flesh at that time to dreadful torments. For a life of few years while those infants sacrificed to thine, thou preparedst them an eternal life by the death thou wast to endure, and thou diedst already in them, by waiting till thou couldst die for them. Thus it is, O Lord! that thou wouldst not allow the martyrs suffering for thee, to suffer more than thee, since there are none of them but whose sufferings thou hast felt with thy own. Thou hast also ordained, that by dying for thee, they should have the consolation of living in thee, and find in their temporal evils the assurance of an eternal happiness. Blessed for ever be thy infinite liberality; can we be poor with thee O my God! in whom we possess all the riches of divine love.

V. What a loss is it to me, miserable that I am, when I fly from the cross to indulge my body! Fasting grieves me, prayer wearies me, solitude vexes me, and silence afflicts me. I am impatient in pain, weak in temptations, and attached to sensual pleasures. I can leave nothing for thee, and what I give thee I reckon for lost. I dare not oppose my passions.

I am afraid of what gives me the least trouble; and whatever constrains my liberty dejects my courage. O heart of ice! remiss and ungrateful soul! How far am I from being willing to die for thee, O my God! and from envying the happiness of those who give their lives to thee? Is it thus I return thy love? I see neither drawn sword, nor martyrdom to suffer, and yet I tremble. I fly at the sight of a small inconveniency: how then should I shed my blood for thee? Behold, O Lord! what he is whom thou lovest, for whom thou sufferest, and for whom thou art willing to give thy life.

Have mercy on me, O my God! excite my zeal, support my weakness, raise up my dejected courage, give me strength to bear the pain which is found in the practice of virtues, in the mortification of the body, and in the exercise of thy love. Remember, O Lord! that thou hast said; *without me ye can do nothing*, John xv. 5. Alas! thou seest in the bottom of my heart the truth of thy words. How many times, in discovering to me the dangers to which I am exposed, hast thou interiorly admonished me to be upon my guard, to distrust myself, and to separate myself from pleasures. But I am such a slave to my passions, so fixed to my disorders, that for fear of forsaking them, I become deaf to thy voice. If at any time I have a mind to shake off this shameful slavery, I wish it might not be so soon; and even when I have resolved to do it, I am more afraid of the pain of separation, than of the misfortune of attachment: strange illusion! deplorable blindness! which makes me afraid of my own salvation.

Succour me therefore, O thou strength of my soul! and break my chains; but delay not, *lest my enemy say, I have prevailed against him. Thou openest thy hand, O Lord! and fillest every living creature with blessing. Who sendest forth thy light and thy truth*, Ps. xii. 5. cxliv. 16. xlii. 3. who givest strength to the weak, and victory to those that are overcome: remember that weak and miserable as I am, I am no less thine, than all my other creatures. Remember that when thou camest to seek the lost sheep, thou wast not content to send it back again to the flock, thou carriedst it thither thyself; because it was gone too far from thence to be able to return. I am that sheep, seek me, O divine shepherd! for I have gone astray; and me out, for I am lost; carry me, for I am weak, and bring me back into thy fold.

VI. Whence comes it, O Lord! that *Herod* imagines he cannot preserve his crown but by depriving thee of life? Why will he put so many children to death, assuring himself that thou wilt be one of them? He will therefore neither live nor reign with thee, who art the omnipotent king, the master of life and kingdoms. But, alas! the more I detest *Herod* and his cruelty, the more I condemn myself. Thou knowest, O Lord! whether I resemble him; and perhaps thou seest in me the same dispositions to sin, that were in him, tho' I have no share in the murder of the innocents.

How often have I been willing to preserve my own reputation by destroying that of my neighbour, whom thou hast forbidden me to hurt! How many times, contrary to thy law and doctrine, have I endeavoured to please a friend, in view of my own interest, by flattering him in the wrong, prejudicing the truth, and persecuting virtue! How many graces have I stifled in my soul! O infinite goodness! thou seest daily an infinity of such like disorders, and thou bearest with them. The employment of worldlings, is to violate thy law, to ruin virtue, and to destroy souls; they apply thereto their whole mind, and their care, and industry; and I permit myself to be carried away by that torrent. I forget thee, O my God! I am a greater homicide of myself, than *Herod* was of the innocents; and in the disorder into which my passions throw me, I do not perceive any more than he did, that thou escapest me, and that I lose thee. I imagine I can live, act, and support myself without thee, who art the life, strength, and support of all creatures. Thou art willing to make me reign, and to enrich me by the poverty of spirit; and I destroy it in myself by the desire of being rich. Thou wouldst aggrandize me by humility, and I reject it by an inclination of becoming great. Thou wouldst conduct me to glory by patience, and I lose patience by the love of glory.

I am contrary to thee in all things, O my Saviour! and methinks I am afraid, as well as *Herod*, of meeting with thee; nevertheless how poor, miserable, abandoned, and remote from eternal life and true happiness, am I without thee! have mercy on me, O my God! and permit me not to follow what I desire; give me not what I desire, but what is convenient for me. Ah, Lord! rather the death of the innocents, than the life of *Herod*! May I begin this day to die to myself, and to live in thee. Inspire me with the love of thy law, esteem thy doctrine, and submission to thy will. May my greater desire

fire be to nourish myself with what thou teachest me, to shed my blood for what thou commandest me, to live by thee, and die for thee. Put an end to my miseries, O Lord! for they cannot have an end but by thee. Let me wish neither for sight, nor strength, nor life but to love and serve thee. It is less glorious to thee, O thou God of my soul! to fill thy house with converted finners, than with martyrs and innocents; glorify thyself therefore in me, O my Saviour! in drawing me to thee by the odour of thy perfumes and divine virtues; penetrate the bottom of my heart, and inflame it with thy love; make it hate the world, and burn continually with the fire of possessing thee.

O most blessed mother of God! O sure refuge of finners! who have always lived in Christ and for Christ; raise up again by your intercession, my soul dead with sin. And ye blessed spirits, who by the power and goodness of that divine Saviour, reign with him, obtain that his love may reign in me, and that I may reign eternally with you. *Amen.*

X. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

His obedience.

AFTER the death of *Herod*, and of those who designed to put *Jesus* to death, *Joseph*, admonished by an angel, departed from *Egypt* to return into *Judea* with the child and mother; but having understood that *Archelaus* reigned there, in his father's stead, he stopped at *Nazareth*, a city of *Galilee*, because he was afraid lest *Archelaus* being heir of his father's kingdom, should be also that of his cruelty. As *Joseph* and Mary went every year to the temple of *Jerusalem* according to God's command, *Jesus* being then twelve years of age, going either along with them, they lost him in the temple, where having found him at last after three days, they brought him back to *Nazareth*. The gospel mentions nothing of what he did from that time to the 30th year of his age, but that he was subject to them; and that submission is the abridgment of his

his life and doctrine, the cause of all his labours, and according to the apostle St. Paul, the origin of all his glory. *He came obedient, says he, to death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also exalted him, and hath given him a name, which is above every name, Philip. ii. 8, 9.*

The first of his words related in the gospel, is a word of obedience. *Did you not know*, said he to his blessed mother, *that I must be employed about the things that are my father's*, Luke ii. 49. And he would not have us know any thing else of the first thirty years of his life, but that he *was subject to them*, whom his father had given him for his superiors.

When he began to live amongst men, his common discourses were, that *I am come from heaven, not to do my will, but the will of him that sent me* John, vi. 38. ; *my food is, that I do the will of him that sent me*, iv. 34. ; *my doctrine is not mine, but of him that sent me*, vii. 16. ; that the cup which he was to drink for us, was that which his father had given him, xviii. 11. And the last words which he pronounced, being ready to expire on the cross were ; *it is consummated*, xix. 30. *into thy hands I commend my spirit* Luke xxiii. 46 ; that is, I have accomplished, father, all that thou hast commanded me ; and I leave, by dying, to thy disposal, my life, death, and merits, and their application.

II. There are no expressions that can explain what the dependance was wherein our Saviour lived and died. For that reason it is that St. Luke has shewn in one word the obedience of thirty years, which he could not express in many, and which the other evangelists have not mentioned : for who can comprehend the perfection wherewith Mary and Joseph presumed to command Christ, and that with which he obeyed them ; the respect and humility of the blessed virgin in regard of him who was her son and her God ; and the difficulty she had to command him ? She commanded him nevertheless as his mother, because she knew that God would have it so, and that in commanding the son she obeyed the father. Joseph, as the head of the family, was respected by the mother and son, and that superiority infinitely humbled him. Christ obeyed them both in silence, with respect and joy, as those who held the place to him of God his father. Behold without doubt the most perfect obedience that ever was practised in heaven or on earth.

And yet all these wonders were hidden from the eyes of men : *Joseph* and *Mary* appeared only to the public prudent and moderate parents, and Christ an obedient son. In private they very regularly observed the law of God, and lived according to their condition, by their hand-labour. Our Saviour wrought with St. *Joseph*, and assisted him in all things, as far as his age and strength could permit him. God alone knows with what sentiments the father and mother received the services of such a son, whom they knew to be their creator : they admired his humility, obedience, and application to labour ; and familiarity did not in the least diminish in them that profound respect which they had for him, whom they commanded only in obedience to God. They learnt from his divine mouth the secrets of heavenly doctrine, which he communicated to them frequently in obedience to their commands. At the end of their work, they retired to pray ; but what must their prayer have been, in the presence of him who was their God ! and what abundance of graces did they not receive therein ! It was an admirable thing to see God subject to his own creature, the eternal word to a carpenter, and the sovereign majesty to the most abject employments of a poor cottage.

Those who obey others in the world, have always some hopes of becoming masters themselves, after having obeyed a certain time. The slave hopes for his liberty, the servant his recompence, the son the succession of his father. But Christ knew he should not depart from the obedience of *Mary* and *Joseph*, but to enter again into that of his eternal father, which was to cost him his life, and end only by the death of the cross.

During the three years that he manifested himself to the world by his doctrine and miracles, he never assumed to himself the glory of them, but referred all to the power and wisdom of his father who had sent him ; to teach the grandees of the world, that in the highest stations, they ought not to forget their dependance on God whose servants they are, even when they command other men. In fine, our Saviour obeyed with perfect submission unjust judges, an idolatrous president, and cruel ministers, as superiors whom his father had appointed him for that time. His example shews us, that to obey well we must regard in those who command us, neither age, capacity, merit, talents, nor virtue itself ; but only him whose place they hold towards us.

III. If we consider attentively this model of all perfection, we shall also discover, that as God has included the whole observance of the law in charity, he has also reduced the whole proof of charity to the practice of obedience: *If you love me, says he, keep my commandments—He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is, that loveth me—He that loveth me not, keepeth not my words*, Jo. xiv. 15. 21. 24. So that we do not please God if we love him not, and we love him not if we do not obey him. Love and obedience produce the same effects, and have the same reward; the want of either is equally punished, and stands in need of the same remedy; obedience encreases by love, and love is perfected by obedience. Love sanctifies the soul, unites it to God, and obtains it the favours of heaven; but obedience confirms and secures the possession of them. By disobedience love is lost, and all temporal and spiritual punishments incurred: obedience on the contrary re-establishes love, and reconciles us to God. In fine, all christian wisdom seems to be included in this virtue. Therefore, tho' the tree which God had forbidden *Adam* the fruit of was called the tree of knowledge, yet it was not because *Adam*, by the eating of that fruit, was to become more knowing, according to the serpent's false promise, but perhaps because by abstaining from the fruit of that tree in the spirit of obedience, he would have acquired a new degree of light: for to know how to sin is not a knowledge, but an ignorance and blindness. He is the best instructed who knows good without the experience of evil; and who, knowing evil only by its opposition to good, knows it without danger, and as far as it is necessary for avoiding it.

Which made *St. Augustin* say, that God could not teach us better what obedience is, than by forbidding our first parent a thing which appeared of small consequence, which was not bad in itself, and which might even be good. We comprehend thereby that the perfection of this virtue consists no less in omitting good forbidden, than in doing that which is commanded; and that its value is in itself, and not in its object. The wisdom of a christian consists in obedience; and therefore it is that *David* begged it so often of God: *Teach me, O Lord!* said he, *to do thy will, because thou art my God. One thing I have asked of our Lord, this will I seek for, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life*, as a faithful servant, that knows and does the will of his master. *Pf. cxlii. 1. xxvi. 7.*

IV. Disobedience proceeds commonly from three poisoned sources. The first is the esteem of ourselves, which, is nothing else but a blindness of the soul, that, hindering us from seeing our own weaknesses, makes us impatiently bear in another the superiority which we think ourselves worthy of; this presumption precipitated *Lucifer* into hell, and the contrary virtue exalted the blessed virgin to the dignity of mother of God. It is to oppose so great an evil, that the saints have armed themselves with obedience, submitted themselves to every one, have always chose rather to do the will of others than their own, and to humble human pride in them, have obeyed even those who had no right to command them. They interiorly esteemed themselves unworthy of living among the servants of God, regarding them all as their superiors; and, because that humility of heart is not acquired without great pains, they begged it continually of God by fervent prayers.

The second source of disobedience is the attachment to our own sense, which is always attended with obstinacy and pride; and so difficult to be healed, that it is rare to find men in whom the divine light has dispelled the vapour which causes such a dangerous infatuation: for it is from thence that heresies and schisms spring up in the church, rebellions in states, troubles and disorders in religious communities: this also obliged the saints to engage themselves by vow to obey another man, though he was no better than themselves, to bridle by that means the disorders of their own judgment, and to expel by that remedy, tho' bitter, so dreadful a poison. As the cure of this evil must come from heaven, we ought also to beg of God, and to endeavour at the same time to repress in ourselves the spirit of contradiction, to keep our reason under a strict silence, to despise ourselves interiorly, not to prefer ourselves to any one; to be persuaded that God communicates his light to superiors; that he assists them with a particular protection, and that it is better without comparison to submit ourselves for the love of God to the will of another, than to expose ourselves to those misfortunes which our own will engages us in.

The third source of this fault is the irregular affection to any thing whatsoever; for when we are possessed thereof, we commonly withdraw ourselves from obedience, either for our own satisfaction, or to please those we love; by this it was that *Adam* fell: he was not so foolish as to flatter himself that he could become like God, or not to give credit to his mena-

ces ; but the fear of displeasing his wife, and the desire of satisfying himself, rendered him disobedient. 'Tis also for remedying this evil that Christ tells us in the gospel ; *if any one will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me* ; me, who in the whole course of this mortal life have found neither pleasure nor rest in any thing but obedience. *Mat. xvi. 24.*

V. Since this virtue is as it were the general remedy of all evils, we must not wonder if the scripture and holy fathers give it such great encomiums. It is necessary every where for this visible world subsists only by that subordination and dependance which God has established amongst the creatures of which it is composed. Empires, Republics, Armies, and all bodies are maintained only by order, and order is not observed without obedience ; therefore *David* having asked *Wherein doth a young man correct his way ?* answers immediately *In keeping thy words—I am delighted in the way of thy testimonies, as in all riches.* This whole psalm is full of the praises of obedience, and of the blessings it procures us. *Psal. cxviii. 9, 14.*

VI. Obedience may be considered with respect to three sorts of persons. First, with relation to those who, by the duty of their state, command others. Secondly, with relation to those who neither obey nor command any one. Thirdly, with relation to those who have made a vow of obedience. The first are exposed to great dangers ; but they have also great occasions of merit. The others walk more safely ; but the third are infinitely happy, when they know how to relish the happiness of their condition. All ought continually to have regard to the law and will of God, as the compass-needle has regard to the polar-star.

Let those who command propose to themselves above all things to imitate the conduct of God, whose place they hold by employing the attractives of goodness and virtue rather than the ways of severity, to make themselves be obeyed ; nothing is more efficacious, either to good, or evil, than the example of a superior. When nothing appears in him but justice, without sweetness or an inclination to please, inferiors have not a sufficient esteem for him, and easily pass from the contempt of the superior to the contempt of obedience. But these marks of virtue and goodness ought to be directed to

God

God, since superiors are the ministers of his will, and not the proprietors of their power.

It is a deplorable blindness in those who command, to regard the exercise of their power as a good which is their own, and not as an obedience they pay to God. *And now ye kings understand, says David, take instruction you that judge the earth. Serve the Lord in fear, in the stations wherein he has placed you, and rejoice in him with trembling, Ps. xi. 10, 11.* you that are elevated above others, and placed, as one may say, between heaven and earth, consider yourselves rather as the servants of God, than superiors of men: *embrace discipline, lest sometime our Lord be wroth, and you perish out of the just way, Ps. xi. 12.* For those who are placed above others, unless they take great care to preserve themselves in humility, commonly fall into the fault of ascribing all to themselves, of desiring to be applauded for every thing they do, of believing they are deprived of the honour that is not paid to them, and of being offended with every thing that is not done for them. Thus they take amiss the counsels that are given them, because they imagine that proceeds from a diffidence of their prudence: and are ashamed to follow the knowledge which they are not the authors of. If in the accomplishment of their duty they sought only the will and service of God, they would hear all good counsels joyfully, from what quarter soever they came, and would chuse much rather to be assisted, than applauded, by every one.

Those that live without command and independently are free from those faults, and their whole obedience consists in the observance of the will of God. But, alas! so little regard is had thereto in this our age, that he who makes it the rule of his conduct, passes for an extraordinary, singular, austere, unfociable, and extravagant person. We ought to live, say they, like others, and follow only the common ways; but this life and these ways proceed from *the prudence of the flesh*, which according to the apostle, *Rom. viii. 6. is death*, and from *the wisdom of this world*, which is *folly with God*. 1. Cor. i. 9. The flesh kills us, because it deprives us of the life of grace; and the world deceives us, because all its maxims are but vanity and illusion. True prudence is to live according to the law of God; *for much better is obedience*, says the wise man, *than victims*, Eccl. iv. 17. and he who is subject to God in all things, offers him a continual and always agreeable holocaust.

VII. The obedience of the religious is imperfect, if they join not to the exterior of what is commanded them, the will of obeying, and the submission of their own judgment. Those who are arrived at that purity and simplicity of obedience which makes them regard the order of their superior as the will of God, enjoy a continual peace; but he who behaves in such a manner as to admit of no commands but such as he pleases, who examines and judges his superior, who in his obeying has more regard to the will of man, than to that of God, ought not to flatter himself that his obedience is true.

Thus it is a most prudent counsel for all those that consecrate themselves to God in a religious life, not to place their consolation in a natural attachment to their superior, nor to perform out of human friendship, what ought to be done only out of divine charity. For besides that it is not obeying holily, when we obey a friend only, this false obedience is also the source of a thousand disorders in communities: as it is founded only on self-love, it commonly produces murmuring parties, dissensions, and makes the spirit of the world enter thereby into the house of God. We ought therefore to obey every superior whatsoever indifferently, whether good or bad: if he is less favourable to us, our obedience will be the more pure. A regular community composed of subjects piously submissive, and of a superior without virtue, will always be much better, than that whose superior is holy, and subjects disobedient. Such is the obedience which Christ has taught us by telling the Jews, *Mat. xxiii. 2, 3. The Scribes and Pharisees have sat on the chair of Moses: observe therefore and do all whatsoever they shall say to you: but do not according to their works;* and St. Peter commands us to be *subject to every human creature for God's sake—not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward* 1 Pet. xi. 13. 18. and herein consists the perfection of this virtue: from whence we may draw these three maxims so important for the religious.

The first, that he who seeks to do his own will, or endeavours to bring that of his superior thereto, has neither the peace nor merit of obedience. The second, that in a religious state there is neither holy zeal, nor virtuous prudence, if both are not founded upon a perfect submission to the rule and superiors, in every thing that is not contrary to the law of God. The third, that whosoever desires to find that internal peace promised to the truly obedient, ought to obey man for the love of God.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ in his obedience.

O SOVEREIGN majesty, omnipotent God, my Lord and Creator! from whence comes it that thou vouchsafest to have a continual commerce with thy miserable creature, and that thou canst not like it to have any other rule or conduct but thy will? What am I in thy presence, O my God! and how dare I so much as lift up my eyes towards thee to dive into thy designs and receive thy orders? It would be enough for me that thou shouldst order me to live amongst beasts; to learn from the worms of the earth, that humility which is so necessary for me; from the ant, that care which is profitable for me; and from the most stupid animals patience and obedience: these are masters proportioned to my baseness. Why wilt thou have me then, O Lord! to look up to thy majesty? It was for this presumption that *Adam* fell, and lost his innocence: the angels were cast down into hell, for having resolved to be equal to thee; and *Judas* was lost, because he was not content with being among thy followers. The earth is the place which belongs to me, O my God! it is my mother, from it thy hands formed me, it is my residence and true abode,

O infinite wisdom! though thou hast formed me of clay, thou hast made me for thyself, thou hast taken me out of the earth, not that I should fall into it again, but because thou art pleased to live in my soul, which thou hast inclosed within this earthly body. Thou wilt be my wisdom and light, for discovering thy mercies to me, and for shewing me thy will; that by endeavouring to imitate what I perceive in thee, I may elevate myself above myself, and not remain always plunged in my original mire. Thou vouchsafest to abide in me as in thy own house, and to leave nothing in it but what is subject and pleasing to thee. I adore thee, O divine master! teach me what thou wouldst have me to know, and suffer me not to know any thing else; guide my steps, my senses, my powers, affections, desires, and reason; and let thy will be done in me, as it is done in heaven.

Thou

Thou hast given me a material body, and a spiritual soul; and hast commanded that both should equally obey thee. The angels are no less subject to thee than the smallest worms; nor the terrestrial bodies than the celestial. Let the same order be observed in me, O Lord! let my spirit and flesh rejoice in thee; and let every thing within me be equally subject to thee. Since thou requirest of me a perfect obedience, permit not this clay ever to oppose what thou desirest of my soul.

II. 'Tis thy will, O Lord! And thou hast created our nature in this so perfect an order: but, O heavenly physician! I must here discover my wounds and infirmities to thee. The law of sin lives in me, and resists thy will. I believe by faith what thou teachest me, but when I am to accomplish it, I find myself so weak, that I yield to the desires of the flesh. The world calls me; and though I plainly know that whatever it offers me is nothing but deceit, yet I follow it. Vanity allures me by a thousand false promises, and I believe it. Pleasure solicits me by poisoned sweetness, and I give ear to it.—My disorderly inclinations importune me, and I suffer myself to be hurried away thereby. Thou callest me, O my God! on the other hand by the attractive motions of thy grace, and the pure light of thy truth, and I refuse to obey thee. I hear thy voice, but come not to thee. Thou encouragest me, and yet I am slack. Thou heartenest me again, and I am still afraid. Thou drawest me, and I resist thee. I see my failings and do not amend them. I am sensible of the danger I am in, and continue in it.

How deplorable is this state, and how worthy my extreme misery of thy compassion? I fear thee, O Lord! and I fear myself. My vicious habits, and thy holy law torment me almost equally; the things which thou requirest of me, and those which I have hitherto loved rend my heart, and yet I can neither forsake myself nor seek thee. O Prince of peace! O divine deliverer, quell this intestine war, deliver me from this torment, *break my bonds*, that all may be re-united in me *a sacrifice to thee a sacrifice of praise*, and that I may be entirely thine. *Psalms cxv. 17.* Since thou grantest me the grace of knowing the danger I am in, grant me also that of not losing the light which thou givest me, of not relapsing into my former blindness, and of never sleeping in that abyss of sin, where thy voice is no longer heard, thy light is no longer seen, and where they

they are no longer sensible of that mortal poison which kills the soul, by separating it from thee, O my God! who art its true life.

How much was I to be lamented in so dreadful a state! I lived not by thee, nor by thy truth, nor in the observance of thy law, but in vile affections, profane desires, shameful engagements, and in other abominations which thy mercy beheld, and bore with. Thou departedst not from me, O my salvation and remedy! Thou healedst me in baptism, and gavest me thy law, that it might be the meditation of my heart day and night; turn my eyes away therefore from every thing else, that they may not see vanity; let not my feet run but to serve thee, nor my hands labour but only to please thee.

But when will it be, O divine master! O powerful restorer of my losses! O wise reformer of my disorders! when will it be that thou wilt re-unite in thyself alone all the dissipation and multiplicity of my thoughts; that thou wilt draw me after thee by the odour of thy perfumes, by the charms of thy beauty, and by the sublimity of thy doctrine? When wilt thou establish in me an eternal peace between the flesh and the spirit? *Blessed is the man whom thou shalt instruct, O Lord! and shalt teach him out of thy law. That thou mayest give him rest from the evil days; till a pit be dug for the sinner, and till the enemy, which is the body, be in the grave, Ps. xciii. 12. 13.*

III. Present thyself therefore to my soul, O mirror of eternal truth! that it may discover in thee its spots and blemishes. But thou shewest them continually to it, O Lord! I behold in my life the defects and vanity of mine, and I cannot excuse myself on account of my ignorance. Thou art my God! To thee alone belong glory and majesty; every thing is naturally subject to thee; and yet, to confound my pride, thou concealest thy greatness: thou subjectest thyself to thy creatures, obeyest the work of thy own hands, and dost the will of those whom thou feedest and governeest. Is the blessed virgin less thy creature, for being thy mother? Whatever she has, and whatever she is, does it not come from thee? Has her quality of mother taken from thee the sovereign dominion thou hast over her? Whence comes it then that thou obligest her to command thee and observe in regard to her an obedience of thirty years? What need hast thou of her conduct, thou who art

art the infinite wisdom, and governeſt both thoſe who command, and thoſe who obey.

Be thou always before the eyes of my ſoul, O faithful mirror of all virtues ! that I may learn in thee to know and hate myſelf, to imitate thee, and to waſh out all the ſtains of my life by the imitation of thine. How can I by ſeeing thee, not ſubmit myſelf entirely to thy will, and not even obey all creatures ? What evil can there happen to me, though I ſhould put myſelf under the feet of every body for thy love ? There it is, O Lord ! I ſhall find thee, and ſhall be like thee, who waſt trod under the feet of finners ; but if I exalt myſelf, I loſe thee, becauſe thou hateſt the proud ; and when we depart from humility, we always depart from thee.

Thou ſeeſt, O my God ! how full I am of preſumption and vain eſteem of myſelf ; from thence proceeds that confidence in my own knowledge, and tie to my own will, which hinders me from ſubmitting myſelf to thoſe whom thou commandeſt me to obey, makes me loſe interior peace, and is in me the ſource of an infinite number of ſins. For my own judgment ſeduces me in a thouſand manners, ſometimes by the affections of my heart, and the ſenſe of pleaſure ; ſometimes by the motions of humour, indignation, and wrath ; ſometimes by the falſe pomp of vanity ; often by envy and intereſt ; and always by that irregular inclination which proceeds from the corruption of the carnal man.

When I would ſerve thee according to my own humour, I begin to diſpleaſe thee ; becauſe by following my own light I forſake thine ; and this is what renders my faults inexcuſable, my blindneſs more dangerous, and my wounds more incurable : for the more I depend upon myſelf, the leſs I know myſelf, and the more guilty I am. Thou wouldeſt have me to poſſeſs my ſoul, and find a ſolid peace in my ſubmiſſion ; and I ſeek trouble in my own will. Thou art willing to protect me by obedience, and I expoſe myſelf, by diſobeying, to all the deſigns of my enemies. When I reſign myſelf to the conduct of others, thou takeſt mine upon thyſelf, and yet I chuſe rather, by withdrawing from obedience, to take upon myſelf the whole account I am to give thee. But if thou entereſt into judgment with thy ſervant, O my God and ſovereign judge ! what ſhall become of me ? What ſhall be the lot of this earthly man, full of miſeries and ſin ? I may indeed deceive myſelf ; but I cannot deceive thy infinite

wiſdom

wisdom. Convert me therefore, O Lord! and humble my pride, before the day of thy wrath.

Thou knowest how dangerous it is for man to live according to his own will; for that reason thou hast been pleased that the children of *Adam* should be diffident of their own light, and should receive thine through the channel of obedience. Thou enlightenest the submissive, assistest the humble, and resistest the proud: when I obey for the love of thee, I am sure of pleasing thee; and thou never permittest me to go astray, in following the conduct of others by a desire of imitating thee. But if I am ashamed of submitting myself, and prefer my own will to that of others, who shall assure me that I accomplish thine?

When I abound in my own sense, I often scandalise my neighbour, I despise him and admire myself; I flatter myself with being wise, and I know not myself; I think I walk in safety, and I behold not the precipices which surround me; I continue abandoned to myself, deprived of thy help and light; and I am unconcerned amidst so many subjects of fear. O my Lord and my God! who art still willing to be my favour and salvation, thou knowest that presumption, vain-glory, and self-will are the cause of my ruin; pluck from my heart those corrupt roots, teach me to have recourse to thee with a sincere desire of my cure, since thou alone art my remedy, and since thou alone can heal the wounds of my soul.

IV. Teach me, O heavenly master! the value of this virtue which is so dear to thee, which attended thee every where, and made thee obey without resistance, not only thy blessed mother and St. *Joseph*, but also the unjust judges who condemned thee, and the executioners who crucified thee. When they demanded thy hands to load them with chains, thou gavest them. When they commanded thee to take off thy garment, thou didst so. When thou wast obliged to sit down to be derided, thou compliedst. When they presented thee with gall and vinegar, thou didst taste of it. When they ordered thee to extend thyself upon the cross, thou obeyedst them, and thou fulfilledst the will of thy persecutors, as if the eternal father had spoken to thee by their mouths.

How thy virtues praise thee, O Lord of heaven and earth! how the angels and saints glorify thee, how all the powers of my soul bless thee! Why am I not transported with love and admiration

admiration at the sight of those so pure truths which thou teachest me! Thou hatest the sinner, because he is unjust; and thou wilt have me to obey him; thou condemnest injustice, and thou requirest me to submit thereto. Why so, O my God! but to make me comprehend that I ought not to regard in him who commands me any other superior but thee; nor any other will but thine.

How difficult is it for me, O Lord! to enter into the holy freedom of thy children, since I love the slavery of my blind and disorderly will! If thou exactest painful and troublesome things of me, what ill can befall me from thence, since it is thou who recommendest them to me? If I beheld thee with my eyes, and were assured that thou thyself declaredst thy will to me, with what readiness would I not obey thee! and if it be certain, as I cannot doubt of it, that thou governest all things in heaven and earth, what signifies it to me by whom I learn thy will, whether by an angel or a devil, by a saint or by a wicked man?

Ah, Lord! thou seest the bottom of my heart, and thou knowest I lose interior peace, when I distinguish between those that command me. Grant me grace to consider nothing in them but thee alone, and to resign myself entirely to the conduct of thy providence. For then although thou shouldst subject me to my cruellest enemies, thou wouldst guide their heart and mouth, and they should command me nothing but what would be profitable for me.

If thou shouldst give me a superior that were unjust, wicked, or my enemy; thou wouldst turn all his malice to my advantage, and whilst he should ruin himself by his bad intentions, I should save myself by the sincerity of my obedience.

I cast myself therefore at thy feet, O thou God of my soul! conduct me by what way thou pleasest; govern me by whom thou wilt, since thou art continually in all things, and in every person, my superior director and master. Thou knowest, lovest, and guidest me by that knowledge and love, let it be through what instrument it will.

Whatever creature commands me, and however despicable he may be, I am still unworthy of receiving thy orders by him, and there is none so wicked but to whom I may justly submit myself. But grant, O Lord! that in obeying him, I may

may obey thee alone, and consider nothing but thy will in this, for thou art the father of mercies, and disposest all things with sweetness and love.

V. Hear me in this moment, O God of love ! and receive the most humble prayer I make to thee. What thou requirest above all things, is that I would obey thee, and the first thing thou commandest me, is to love thee. Can I find there any reluctance in obeying thee ? No, my Lord ! and I conjure thee to accept at present what I offer thee, and to confirm by thy grace the protestation which my miserable heart is about to make thee.

I, a miserable sinner, in consideration of that love where-with thou hast given thyself wholly to me, here make a public profession of perpetual obedience to thy love. Receive, O divine love ! these hands, these feet, these eyes, this tongue, all my senses, my whole body, my will, memory, and understanding, the desires, sighs, intentions, and all the motions of my soul. Receive, O Lord ! all the hours, moments, and accidents of my life, and my whole self interior and exterior. Thou hast said, that we can do nothing without thee ; nor remain with thee, but by the union of thy love. Ah ! let that love be then the superior of thy creature ; let it govern my senses, powers, and actions ; let it regulate my labour and rest ; let it make me go and stay where it pleases ; let it reign over me absolutely ; let it afflict and comfort me ; let it humble and exalt me ; let it consume my imperfections ; let it keep my whole interior in dependence ; let it recollect its dissipation, extend its narrowness, elevate its lowness, and fill its whole space. O divine love ! possess me wholly, and then do with me what thou wilt : plunge me into a sea of suffering ; overwhelm me with torments ; for I shall fear nothing when I am with thee ; and since thou art more desirous of what I ask thee, than I can be myself, transform me so into thee, that I may no longer know nor find myself but in thee.

O most pure mother of God ! the humblest and most obedient of all creatures ! consider the dreadful crimes my pride and disobedience have engaged me in, and obtain for me of Christ your son and your God the grace of doing always his holy will. O blessed spirits ! who reign in a most perfect obedience, obtain for me that happy freedom wherein we live, that being disengaged from myself, I may no longer have any other will but that of the Lord, whom ye behold and adore for ever. *Amen.*

XL. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

His Poverty.

SINCE St. Luke, Acts i. 1. affirms, that Jesus *began to do* and afterwards *to teach*, we ought to believe that he practised during thirty years of his life, all the perfection which he taught in the three last, to serve as an example for all those who are entrusted with the instruction of others. Words unaccompanied with deeds are soon defaced from the minds of the auditors, but they remain in God's remembrance for the condemnation of those masters who perform not what they say: whereas being joined with actions, they are of great weight before men, and very meritorious with God. For that reason our Saviour, though he needed not the help of works, and was by himself worthy of all credit, employed much more time in practising virtue, than in teaching it; because he would teach us the small esteem that those deserve who pretend to acquire the authority of being believed, not by the examples of their lives, but by the quality of their persons. As they attribute to themselves what belongs to God alone, it commonly happens by a just judgment, that at the same time their lives are rejected by God, and their persons despised by men: and though this contempt appears not always publicly, the reputation which remains to them is but a weak support against the reproaches of their own conscience.

We may know by all that Christ preached in the latter years of his life, what he practised in the former; and as his sermon on the mount is an abstract of his doctrine, and which he began by the praise of poverty, whereto he gives the first place in the evangelical perfection, we have reason to conclude how much he loved the practice of this virtue.

II. Though he was the king of glory, and possessed all the treasures of heaven and earth, he was pleased to be poor for the love of us. For his birth here on earth he made choice of a poor place, which even belonged not to him; of a poor mother, and of a poor mechanic for his reputed father: his first courtiers were poor shepherds; and he was *presented* in the temple, and *redeemed* as the poorest of men. The three last years of his life he had not where to lay his head, being poorer than the

foxes, and birds of the air, which have their holes and nests, Mat. viii. 20. His disciples gathered ears of corn, and rubbed them betwixt their hands, eating the grain thereof to appease their hunger. Nothing could be found one day for himself and them but *five barley loaves and two fishes*, John vi. 9. The apostles whom he chose were poor, and he commanded those that were willing to follow him to give to the poor whatever they possessed. He was content with the seamless garment which his blessed mother had made him. In fine, he died naked upon the cross, and was laid in a *borrowed tomb*.

It is easy to judge from the beginning and end of his life, what the middle of it was: none but those that feel the rigour of poverty, can comprehend what it cost Jesus Christ. His diet was poor, often bad, and such as his parents could gain with him by their hand-labour, being more applied to prayer and divine things, than in procuring the conveniencies of life. In a word, the King of the universe deprived himself so of every thing, that he did not even reserve his own body and life, since he sacrificed both for our salvation.

III. He would not have given us such great examples of poverty had it not been the *basis* and *foundation* of christian perfection. For the principal end of his doctrine, was to kindle in us the pure love of those goods for which we were created; and in that love he found the general remedy of our evils, which are all reduced to the oblivion of eternal things, and the attachment to temporal ones. The heart of man is often so taken up with them, that it neither believes nor hopes for any thing further; and refuses its love to the only goods which deserve it by forsaking what can render it happy.

The more it runs after those false goods which corrupt it, the less it is satisfied; and they serve only to deprive it of the bliss and esteem of eternal goods: thus it falls from one evil into another; it divides itself to different objects, all incapable of satisfying it, and abandons the only thing necessary, in which re-uniting its whole love, it would find its repose, be delivered from a thousand difficulties, repair its interior losses, and be purified by the communication of the divine blessings for which it was created. For the happiness of the soul consists in the unity of its love, and its misery in the multiplicity of its desires. Now it is poverty which disengages us, and disposes us to receive the riches of divine love, by depriving us of an infinite number of amusements.

Therefore

Therefore Christ, who according to his own testimony, came upon earth to kindle the fire of divine love, among all the virtues that were to serve for the execution of his design, gave the first rank to poverty; and made use of every thing to persuade us thereto, of examples, promises, and exhortations. *Seek first the kingdom of God, and his justice, says he to us, and all things shall be given you besides. Be not solicitous, saying: what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or with what shall we be clothed?—your father knows that you stand in need of all these things. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Mat. vi. 30, 31, 32. V. 3. St. *Augustin*, Ep. 120 gives to this virtue the name of humility, because it tears up the root of pride in us, by destroying the presumption and vain confidence, which the prosperities of this world inspire us with. 'Tis also in this virtue, adds the same father, that the first gift of the Holy Ghost consists; that is the gift of filial fear, which keeps the soul in a loving apprehension of being separated from God by sin, and preserves it pure and free from all attachment to the creature.

IV. Religious orders are founded on this virtue; and though they make use of different means, yet they have all the same end, which is to separate the heart from earthly affections, which might possess the place of divine love: but among these orders, the church prefers those which make profession of a stricter poverty, because she judges them richer in the love of God, and more proper for preserving it.

The *Model* of all perfection, in whom are included all the heavenly blessings, which we can possess or desire, was pleased to live and die poor on earth, that we might not be dazzled with the splendor of his riches, had he appeared in his grandeur; nor behold any thing in him but himself, as he sought nothing in us but our hearts. For, properly speaking, poverty of spirit is an interior disengagement from mean and contemptible things, to be enriched with those which can never be sufficiently esteemed.

Hence it is that the saints, who were illuminated by God, judged themselves poor amidst the riches of this world; and rich in the greatest poverty: because they were sensible in themselves that earthly goods, though they were all joined together, are incapable of filling the heart of man; and that the spiritual goods which he possesses in God, are they alone wherewith the human heart can be satiated. Thus evangelical

poverty

poverty ought rather to be called plenty, than poverty; had not our Saviour, to make himself be understood, spoken the language of men.

We daily perceive that no person has a greater esteem of what he does, than he who is capable of doing little; and that on the contrary, he who can perform a great deal, is rarely satisfied with his own work. The liberal man never thinks he gives enough, and the avaricious man believes he always gives too much. The glutton looks upon one day's fasting as a heroic action; and the passionate man imagines he makes a great sacrifice, when he kills not him that has offended him. Thus the truly poor in spirit esteems himself lavish, when he allows any thing to his necessity: the patient man thinks himself passionate, when he is sensible of injuries: and the temperate believes himself guilty of gluttony, when he spends some days without fasting: it is the same in other things, because the disposition of our hearts is almost continually the rule of our judgments.

Thus when we feel in ourselves any affection to temporal goods, we admire the poverty of *St. Francis*; whereas those who have tasted the spiritual sweetness of poverty, are astonished that he did not extend it still further. We look upon poverty as a misery, whilst we are in love with riches; but when we are full of divine love, we find in poverty inestimable treasures.

V. There are in the church two sorts of poor. The first in the abundance of earthly wealth, have their hearts disengaged from thence; the others renounce it for ever, that they may serve God with greater freedom. God has permitted, that amongst the first sort there should be some perfect men; that on the one hand the religious might not be puffed up on account of their poverty, and that on the other, the rich of the world might be inexcusable in the bad use of their riches. Thus *Abraham* was a perfect model of obedience in grandeur; *Susanna* a rare example of chastity in marriage; and *Job's* heart was poor and disengaged in the midst of all his riches.

The rich who aspire to poverty in spirit, have two extremities to fear, prodigality and avarice; but the latter is the most odious: for the prodigal does good to many, but the avaricious does it to none, not even to himself; the one loves to

to give, the other to receive: and our Saviour has said; that *it is more blessed to give than to receive*, Acts xx. 35. The prodigal is least attached to earthly wealth; and if he has other vices, the avaricious is not free from them, or at least does not avoid them out of the love of virtue, but for fear of expence. The prodigal is least remote from the Kingdom of God, and he may be cured by depriving him of the instrument of his disorder; but the avaricious is insatiable, and finds in his tie to worldly goods, an almost invincible obstacle to his conversion. The *prodigal child*, corrected by his own disgrace, returns to his father's house, and the avaricious rich man, insensible to the miseries of poor *Lazarus*, is buried in hell.

Those who have renounced the riches of this world by a religious profession, ought to remember that the poor Jesus is their treasure, and that in his poverty all their riches consist. now in regard to those who have thus offered up all without reserve in the sincerity of their heart, Jesus is that mysterious book written within and without, Apoc. v. 1. wherein they read this excellent truth: but he is a book shut and sealed with seven seals, which can neither be opened nor read by those whose sacrifice is imperfect, and that commit theft upon the holocaust. Hence it is that they are often in as much trouble about the loss or refusal of a trifle, as an avaricious person would be at the loss of his treasure; being so much the further from the poverty of divine love, as they are the less faithful in small things. Unless the religious is a devout man, he cannot be truly poor in spirit: it is prayer which separates him from the earth, and purifies his love: altho' he may satisfy his conscience, by avoiding all property, he will never attain to evangelical poverty, nor relish the sweets thereof, but by a communication with God, which destroys and consumes all terrestrial affections.

The truly poor in spirit *build in gold, silver, and precious stones* according to the expression of the apostle, 1 Cor. iii. 12. while others make houses of nothing but wood, hay, and stubble. Both may be saved, but the last shall be so as by fire, as those who are not saved from a great conflagration but by passing through the midst of the flames: for the fire shall try all our works, and whatever is earthly in them must necessarily be consumed, either by the fire of the love of God, or by that of his justice. *The figure of this world passes away*, 1 Cor. vii. 31. happy is the man who adheres to what is solid, and places his heart where his true treasure is.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ in his poverty.

O Treasure of celestial riches! O abundant source of all blessings! O infinite happiness of souls desiring thee! O Jesus, my God, my Lord, my King, my only good, and all my greatness! Let my heart be sensible, and my spirit know, by means of thy divine light, the designs of that eternal love. Grant, O Lord! that I may love what thou givest me the knowledge of, and that my will being perfectly conformable to thine, I may live in thee, and thou in me. Immortal thanks be given thee, because thou vouchsafest to be my riches and felicity. I possess all in thee, and I possess it securely: for thou art so high, that evil cannot reach thee; so powerful, that nothing can be wanting to thee; and so rich, that no misery can be found where thou art. Thou possessest a thousand times more riches than I can know; thou promisest me more of them than I can desire; and thy greatness is infinitely above all that I can comprehend.

Thou possessest in such a manner every thing that can render me happy, that I find nothing but misery out of thee; and since thou art pleased it should be so, O my God! how can I desire it should be otherwise? I accept, O Lord! of this incomparable mercy; teach me to desire, love, and preserve it. Separate my heart from the earth; take from my senses the relish of every thing that brings me not to thee; deliver my mind from those vanities which amuse it; fill thou alone that space which thou hast made only for thyself, that thou mayest be in me what thou desirest to be; and that I may sigh after and embrace none but thee, who art all my happiness: but a happiness which is wholly mine, great and certain. Thou art a good, since thou art the source of all goodness; thou art wholly mine, since thou refusest me nothing of what thou art; thou art a great good, since thou art a divine good; and thou art a certain good, since nothing can take it from me unless I am willing.

Let my whole interior therefore be turned towards thee, O my God! let all my powers be employed about thee, and let my whole soul be absorbed in thee, for I can never desire a greater happiness, nor even find any true one out of thee. May thy love, O my God! take deep root in me, that the weight of the flesh may not move it; that the torrent of the world may not carry it away; and that no tempest may force it out of my heart. For since thou art all my happiness, I have nothing further to desire, than that thou wouldst defend me against what might separate me from thee.

II. Undoubtedly it is to induce me to this disengagement, that thou wouldst not possess any thing in this world. Thy design was, that in beholding thee I should see nothing but thee alone, to whom I owe all that I am, and who alone deserveth all my love. There is nothing in heaven or on earth but what is thine; every thing is governed and directed therein by thy orders; this is a demesne which thou canst not alienate. Although thou hast employed, during thy mortal life, all creatures in paying thee service, thou wouldst not have been more powerful thereby; and such an example could have inspired me with nothing but the desire of earthly goods. Thou wouldst not make use of them, though they were thy own, in regard to my blindness and weakness. Thou wast born poor, livest poor, and diedst poor; and thou hadst not so much as either where to lay thy head whilst alive, or wherewith to be buried after death. If thou hadst not whereof to eat, thou sufferedst hunger; if any thing was given thee, thou returnedst thanks for it as the poor do, and if it was refused thee, thou murmuredst not. On *Calvary* they stript thee of thy cloaths, which were the booty of those that crucified thee; on the cross thou wast deprived of the small comforts thou hadst need of in the excess of thy pains, and thou diedst thereon entirely resigned and forsaken.

O Jesus poor and abandoned! is it possible that thou art in want of all things, and every thing is thine; but also dost thou not want all things, that I might find nothing in thee but thyself? Thou leavest me thy humanity poor, naked, forsaken, and yet full of all the riches of the divinity. I behold nothing in thee but God and man, the divine nature and ours; and thou shewest me clearly in that so pure a union, that I ought to love thee purely, and live in thee without the mixture of any terrestrial affection. I adore thy poverty.

erty, O treasure of eternal riches! I adore thy infinite wisdom, and thy designs of bereaving my soul of every thing but thyself.

III. Have mercy on me, O Lord! and grant to thy poor creature the grace of possessing thee alone, and giving itself wholly to thee. But, alas! wretch that I am, I let thee go, seek what thou fliest, submit myself to what thou disdainest, and run after the meanest things with an insatiate hunger; and I am blind enough to think that I can find wherewith to satiate myself out of thee. What profit can I receive from the conveniencies of the body, which thou hast rejected; the favour of men which thou hast despised; the temporal goods which thou hast renounced, and the pleasures of the world which thou hast deprived thyself of? Thou, O Lord! to whom all was due, and whom nothing could hurt, hast preferred the privation of all these things to their abundance, by the love alone which thou hadst for me; I think myself unhappy when I want them, and happy when I possess them even without thee. What blindness! what misery! These perishable goods corrupt me, and I desire them; they make me lose thy love, deprive me of thee, O my God! and of thy divine riches; and yet I esteem myself rich when I possess them, and poor when I am without them.

What hinders me from loving and esteeming thee as I ought, O divine Jesus! is the placing my love and esteem in every thing thou hast judged unworthy of thine. But thou art not surrounded with any of those things that I love, how then shall I find thee in them? O infinite goodness! who wilt not the death of a sinner, but that he be converted and live: was not with a design that I should want any thing in thee, that thou wast pleased to be poor, but to teach me that thou art sufficient for me, and that I can be rich with thee alone. Let thy poverty therefore operate in me what thou desirest in me.

Thou seest it, O Lord! that what I possess on earth affectionately, or earnestly wish for, takes up my whole mind, carries away all my thoughts, and destroys my peace. Whilst I am infatuated therewith, I forget thee, and am no longer able to pray, or adore thee in spirit and truth: I think more of my obligation of loving thee: I reject the graces which thou offerest me; and, what I cannot confess before

thee, O my God! without an extreme confusion, if I have any weak desire of recurring to thee, I find myself so oppressed with misery, that I have not the strength of lifting up my eyes to heaven. I am tied down by a very trifle, a childish amusement, or a sickly fancy. The least pleasure draws me away, although it has no solidity; and I find nothing in it but my mortal poison, and such things as the devil makes use of for withdrawing me from thee. But the height of my misery is, that I do not so much as perceive the state I am in, nor am sensible of the temptations and dangers whereto I expose myself until I am fallen into the precipice. Thou knowest my miseries, O Lord! and thou alone canst remedy them. O Jesus, poor and destitute of every thing, have pity on my poverty. Alas! it is not that which thou lovest and requirest of me, on the contrary it is that which thou hatest, and whereby I lose thee. For I acknowledge how far I am from that poverty of heart which sanctified thy servants. But such as I am, I cast myself at thy feet; break off my chains, loose the bonds which bind me to the earth, and inspire me with sacred horror of every thing that thou hast despised in this life; re-unite in thyself alone all my desires, affections, and thoughts.

IV. O divine light! O thou only treasure of my soul, hearken to it, O Lord! and answer it interiorly. Speak to me, O eternal Word! and grant that I may desire nothing but what thou wouldst have me ask of thee. But since poverty is so dear to thee, and thou wilt love nothing earthly, wilt thou not altogether reject the weak desires of this heart, which has been so long attached to the earth? My heart, wholly blind as it is, answers me, thou wilt not; and it would not give me this answer, if thou didst not inspire it therewith.—Yes, O my Saviour! it is to be alone with me that thou hast divested thyself of every thing else; and thou wilt be poor only that my heart may take the place with thee of every thing thou forsakest. Thou desirest to find in me thy food, cloathing, and repose; and I alone am sufficient to thee in the privation of all creatures. In fine, thou art poor, that all poor hearts might hope to receive thee. Come then, O poor and divine Jesus! enter into this poor heart, and say no longer, that thou hast not where to lay thy head, for I am wholly ready to receive thee.

Remember me

Remember, O Lord! that when thou wast poor upon earth, a publican invited thee to eat with sinners, who were as I am, very poor of thy riches; that their company did not displease thee; and that thou despisedst the murmurs of the proud rich who condemned thee.

Remember that *Zaccheus* the sinner having desired to see thee, thou inviredst thyself to lodge at his house to satisfy him, and carriedst a blessing thither. That *Magdalen* went to seek thee in the house of another sinner, where she was sanctified; and thou wentest afterwards to seek her in her own. That being unwilling to possess any thing in this world, thou invitedst all those that suffered and were afflicted, to come to thee, with assurance of refreshing them. Content with being deprived of every thing else, thou requirest nothing but the love of our hearts. What hinders me then, O Lord! from finding favour with thee?

'Tis true, I am not worthy thou shouldst enter into my soul; but since my unworthiness has not hindered thee from calling me, it ought not to hinder me from following thee: and when thou saidst that *if I be exalted from the earth, I will draw all things to myself*, John xii. 32. thou didst not exclude me; draw me therefore, O my God! I am no less thine than *Matthew*, *Zaccheus*, or *Magdalen*: and if I am still more blind and miserable than they, the excess of my misery is a reason for drawing thy mercy upon me. Remember, O Lord! that thou didst not despise any sort of poor; thou wast born of a poor mother, in a poor place; thou drewest to thy manger poor and simple shepherds; chosest poor and ignorant disciples; calledst to thyself poor sinners; livedst among sinners; and diedst between two sinners. There is no poverty but what thou hast loved, either to practise, heal, or enrich it. Thus I shall not be excluded: I am poor enough to come to thee, O divine Jesus! and I have a lawful title to enter into thy society; receive me therefore, O Lord! into the number of thine; thou wilt find in me whereon to bestow thy riches, and exercise thy mercies.

V. When I see thee so poor, I know not what my heart feels; but I cannot separate myself from thee. There is a greatness and charm in thy poverty wherewith my soul is overjoyed; I adore it as much as I can; grant, O my God! that I may love it as much as I ought. All those things whereof thou

thou deprivedst thyself on earth, serve only to impoverish those who possess them affectionately; and thou heapest true riches upon those that despise them, and givest them a most solid consolation. *The souls of thy poor thou forgettest not for ever*, according to the expression of David, Ps. lxxiii. 19. they are illuminated with thy light, filled with thy wisdom, and guided by thy spirit; nothing troubles them, they enjoy an unalterable peace, are upon earth, but converse in heaven, and lead in their bodies of clay an angelic life. The poor taste sweetness which worldlings seek, and do not find; they have nothing, and possess all things. In the midst of the miseries of this life, they see themselves in a holy freedom, always elevated above the world, and themselves; they are little in the eyes of men, but great before thee, O my God! they despise what the world esteems, by which they are despised; they live with thee, sit at thy table, and after those delicious feasts, every thing on earth seems insipid to them.

When will the happy moment come, O my God and my all! when far from all worldly joys, content with thee alone, and plunged in the ocean of thy riches, I shall say to thee, in a transport of love and gratitude, O my father, my treasure, my repose, and my happiness! it is true, O Lord! that thou art always so; but I feel it only when thou pleasest; that is, when thou touchest my soul interiorly; dispellest its darkness by a ray of thy light; consumeest in it what is mean and earthly by the fire of thy charity; and re-unitest in thyself alone the multiplicity of its desires. How different is my heart from itself, when full of thy gratitude and love; it cries out, my God, my riches, my strength, and delight! It enjoys thee then as a blessing that is its own, and every thing else is nothing to it. Be gone from me earth, world, and riches; let me embrace Jesus poor, abject, and despised, O my Jesus! O my love! O my life! O my all!

VI. *In thee, O divine Jesus! have I hoped, let me not be confounded for ever*, Ps. xxx. 1. All my fears vanish at thy sight. I shall never be ashamed nor repent for having loved thee, believed thee, and left all things to follow thee. Altho' all creatures should rise up against me, my heart shall not fear, because thou art my defence. Armed with thy poverty, I shall be invulnerable against the designs of my enemies; and they shall not know on what side to attack me. Hear, O Lord! the voice of my misery; lend an ear to the desires of a soul that loves thee, and hasten to assist me against those who separate me from

from thee. I come to thee, and chuse thee for my riches and only happiness. Confound all those that endeavour to obscure this light, that they may run away with my treasure under favour of my darkness. Be thou my support, my protector, my refuge, and my salvation.

When thou commandest me to follow thee, and to renounce every thing for thy love, thou knowest my weakness; wherefore thou engagedst thyself at the same time to become my strength, and to have regard, not to the merit of my works, but to the greatness of thy mercy. How secure am I, O divine Jesus! under the shadow of thy wings! how quietly do I live in thy arms! how sweetly do I repose on thy breast! Thou deliverest me from the snares my enemies have hid for surprising me; thou takest upon thyself the care of defending me; that I may neither be moved by poverty which oppresses me, nor infirmity which weakens me, nor the world which persecutes me, nor the devil who tempts me. Thou wilt have it so, and it is just, that I should live without fear in loving and imitating thee, since thou givest me the grace of doing what thou commandest me, and art omnipotent to protect me.

I cast myself therefore, O my Lord and my God! with my miseries, weakness, and sins, and the good desires thou inspir-est me with, into thy paternal arms: *I commend my spirit into thy hands*, which made it after thy own image; reform it by thy wisdom and truth; grant I may discover their secrets, love their conduct, and execute their designs. May that hand without which I can do nothing, not refuse me its help, that being poor in heart, and separate from every thing that separates from thee, I may esteem those spiritual riches, which are to be found in thy poverty, as I ought.

O most pure mother of God! imitatrix of Jesus's poverty, and dispensatrix of his riches; you are not so the mother of the poor, but you may be also that of sinners; obtain me that poverty of spirit which filled you with so many heavenly riches. Blessed spirits, assist this poor sinner, that he may deserve, by the contempt of temporal things, to possess one day with you eternal riches. *Amen.*

XII. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

The austerity of his Life.

VOLUNTARY poverty is commonly accompanied with corporal austerity. The saints that have been poor in spirit, and those who have been so in spirit and body, by renouncing worldly riches for the love of God, have joined to that renunciation an austere and penitent life, every one after his own manner and according to his strength; that they might subject the flesh to the spirit, and practise in regard of their bodies that holy hatred which Christ has so much recommended to us. He has given us also very great examples of this virtue, whilst he lived on earth; and tho' he was not obliged, like us, to mortify his body, which was always subject to the spirit; yet because he was come upon earth, not only to be our remedy, but also our model, he was pleased to shew us in himself, the form of all virtues, and especially of those which are the most necessary for us, without considering whether they were consistent with the dignity of his person. For, having undertaken to satisfy for our sins, as in his passion he did not avoid any of those torments which they resolved to make him suffer, so during his life he omitted none of those painful works which could mortify his humanity.

This divine Saviour of our souls saw how necessary penance was for us; and because interior penance, which consists in sorrow for sins committed, was incompatible with his infinite purity, he embraced the exterior, which is nothing else but an austere and laborious life; recommending it to us as a salutary plank in shipwreck, and in order to render it profitable to us, he consecrated it in his own person.

II. There have been many saints that seemed more austere than Jesus Christ. St. *John Baptist* had neither human cloaths nor food; that austerity drew upon him the admiration of the people, which judges always by the exterior, of the merit of virtue; and the Pharisees were scandalized at seeing our Saviour eat with sinners. Yet all the austerity of the saints, tho' it seemed greater, was much less perfect than his: for it only exercised in them the lowest employment of penance, which

which was to labour in the cure of their wounds, to stop the disorders of corrupt nature, and to repress its appetites. But Christ's austerity gave a value and efficacy to that of the saints, and merited to penitent men those great graces which made them such agreeable victims to God. The end of the penance of the saints, is to destroy what hinders in them the purity of divine love; but our Saviour's penance was the effect of his love; and proceeded from an infinite charity: thus it ought to have been more rigorous in the saints, who were sinful men; but more exemplary and imitable in Christ, who was to be a model proportioned to our weaknesses.

Christ has appeared above man, only in those things where he would not be imitated; as in the power of working miracles, the authority of his word, and sublimity of his doctrine: but what he has obliged or counselled us to imitate in him, is that common life, which had no extreme, for fear of discouraging us; and which was steady without remissness, in order to fix the levity of our nature. He was clothed with pollen, fed with ordinary diet, often contenting himself with water and barley bread, and if he diminished a little of that rigour, when he was invited to eat, he re-assumed it immediately after. He lay upon the ground, slept only as much as was necessary for supporting nature, and wrought no miracles for supplying his own necessities, lest people should doubt whether he was truly a man. To that severe life he added great labours, journeys, watchings, long prayers night and day, continual fastings, and many other austerities which are set down in writing.

III. It is not easy to shew in general how and to what degree we ought to imitate Christ in this virtue; since all men have not the same strength, and necessities; nor are in the same circumstances. What may be said here on that head, till it be spoken of more fully, is that we ought to avoid excess and stiffness therein.

The chief part of penance is an interior sorrow and detestation of sins we have committed, in which we can never exceed; because it encreases in the soul in proportion to the love and love which God infuses therein, and in this life we can neither know the whole deformity of sin, nor love God adequately to his amiableness. Notwithstanding he vouchsafes to be content that we should weep for our crimes, according to

to the measure of his light and grace; but we ought at least to endeavour to obtain that sorrow by exercises of piety, the practice of good works, and by every thing in our power, and when we neglect these means, we are always in an extreme danger of our salvation.

He whom the knowledge of his sin draws not from the occasions of committing it, who confesses it not sincerely, who dissembles, softens and disguises it, who does not resolve to correct and punish himself for it, and to mortify the inclinations which induce him to it, flatters himself in vain with being truly penitent: because all these defects shew still some affection to the sin, and very little sorrow for having committed it; and yet they are but too common, especially among young people, who seldom detest sin heartily, shun but little the occasions of it, and hate not in themselves the propensity of corrupt nature.

The mark of a sincere penance, according to St. Jerome, *l. 1. Ep. ad pœnit.* is to hate sin equally to the love we have borne it: according to St. Ambrose, *l. 2. de pœnit. c. 4.* to suffer willingly, in abhorrence of our past life, all manner of injuries, in order to repair those we have done to God: and according to the devout *Thaulerus*, not to be more desirous of the pardon than the punishment thereof, by an entire resignation to the divine justice. In this last opinion consists the perfection of interior penance; but because it is not common, the holy Scripture admonishes us only, that we *of the sins forgiven be without fear, Eccles. v. 5.* Not that God will call us to account for sins that are once remitted to us; but for fear that assurance of remission should augment in us the facility of sinning. Besides, without a special revelation we can have no certainty that our sins are pardoned us; but only a mere confidence founded on our own conjectures of having used the means prescribed by God for obtaining his mercy, yet we know not whether we have used all necessary diligence therein.

Thus ought we always to weep for sins once committed, and to be continually afraid of committing new ones. For since after penance we can feel ourselves still so inclined to evil, we may think, with an humble fear, that we have not sufficiently detested sin so as to pluck up the deep roots which are left in our souls.

Therefore the saints teach us, that penance ought to continue till death, that sin is a great evil, that we ought not to believe we can expiate it by any sorrow shorter than life, and that God by pardoning it does not dispense with us in the obligation of weeping for it. Hence comes the difference we see betwixt the penance of saints and that of common sinners. Tho' the saints satisfy for their sins, they never satisfy their sorrow; they weep for sin, they detest it, fly from it, and continually fear it. Others on the contrary immediately lose the remembrance of it: the less they feel its weight, the more easily they are persuaded that they have obtained the pardon of it; and upon that persuasion they live in a false tranquillity.

Let them consider what Christ has done, what he has suffered, and what our reconciliation cost him: and they will see in him that they have more reason for fear than assurance. Let them consider in that divine model the three signs which he have set down of a true penance, and they will find that the most abandoned sinner never enjoyed so much pleasure in his sin, as Jesus Christ suffered pains for expiating it; that our Saviour endured reproaches more, than the most ambitious man desired glory in the world; that *having joy proposed unto him*, according to the testimony of the apostle, Heb. xii. 2. he *underwent the cross*; and not content with obtaining us a gratuitous remission, he was pleased to endure pains capable of equalling and surpassing the greatness of our offences. But he well knew the inconstancy and malice of our heart; in order to render his labours profitable to us, he included the virtue of them in the sacraments, and sanctified our painful works by his own, that being continually assaulted by irregular inclinations, we might also have continual helps opposing them. Thus a man that perfectly knew what sin would not cease weeping for his own and those of others, and lamenting over the dangers we are in, of relapsing into sin every moment.

From this discourse we must draw these two truths: the first, that God is always ready to pardon us, when we return to him with a sincere regret for having offended him. The second, that the love which we owe him, ought always to prevent the sorrow and sense of our sins, that we may commit no more for the future.

IV. All Christians ought to imitate the exterior penance, and austere life of Christ, but discreetly; every one according to his strength, condition, and state; upon which the following rules may be observed.

1. We must have regard to the necessities of the body, and not to its appetites; and apply ourselves to know its true necessities with relation to the circumstances of time, place, employments, and dispositions interior and exterior: for it is difficult to prescribe therein a certain rule for all persons. But it may be said in general, that a religious man deceives himself, when under pretence of necessity, he procures himself exquisite and superfluous things, to the prejudice of poverty, temperance, mortification, recollection, freedom of mind, and even of charity towards his brethren; since the one often wants necessaries, whilst the other enjoys superfluity. Besides, the worldly man who follows nothing in that matter but the inclination of corrupt nature, making to himself a necessity of every thing he earnestly desires, falls into an infinite number of disorders. Thus the surest way both for laity and religious, is to consult a prudent, virtuous, and disinterested director, and to follow his decision.

2. We must not allow to nature, without an extreme caution, what it seeks with any irregularity; and in this view we must study all its vicious inclinations, because they are the source of all excess.

3. Every one ought to be attentive to his spiritual advancement, always believing that he does less than what is in his power to do, and that he deceives himself when he imagines he does more than he ought; by this means he will use with more fear and less freedom, those things that are every way necessary.

4. Practise especially that kind of austerity, which will be the properest for correcting that vice into which you most frequently fall, and to which you are most inclined. All remedies are not equally good for all sorts of evils. Liberty of speech is cured better by silence than fasting; and impurity by a guard over the senses, and employing ourselves with God, than by silence: those who do otherwise are often very austere without becoming the better thereby.

5. The spirit

5. That penance which consists in fastings, watchings, hair-cloth, disciplines, hard-bed, and mean cloaths, is always salutary, when it is imposed upon us by the precept of the church, the rules of our state, or the counsel of a wise-man. It is hurtful when it hinders us from discharging our obligations; blameable when it proceeds from self-will; but much the more commendable, when it subjects the flesh the better to the spirit: provided however that we neglect not the other more important mortifications.

6. The safest and most necessary austerity, is that which regulates the senses, passions, tongue, and conversation; which cuts off idleness and all occasions of sinning, and mortifies self-will, obstinacy in our own opinion, and the vain esteem of ourselves. This kind of mortification has this advantage over the other, that we practise it without danger, that it is difficult to exceed in it, that the carnal man fears it much more than the exterior, that he is always sensible of it, and never accustoms himself thereto.

7. But the severest of all penances, according to the testimony of the saints and experienced persons, is interior recollection, and continual prayer. Those that apply themselves thereto, know it; and there are very few if they listened to the sentiments of nature, but would willingly employ the time they spend in prayer, in the most painful corporal labour:—because the liberty of thinking, so natural to man, is contrary thereto; therein his appetites are repressed, his motions restrained, his will bound, his mind attentive that no entrance may be given to any thing that might distract it, or trouble the repose of the heart, and the whole man in fine is as it were captivated thereby, and cannot move towards what he loves, nor enjoy what he desires. And though by a long use one arrives at a life that is quiet, content, and full of those holy sweetnesses which proceed from divine love; though every thing should be then in order, and the body in subjection to the mind, it is often so weakened, dejected, and destroyed thereby, that it stands in need of refreshment; yet one dares not allow it but with great reserve, for fear of departing from that state of continual death, and of prejudicing the union of the soul with God by the refreshment of the body.

Would to God that all those who are touched with the spirit of penance, would adhere to this. The best counsel that

that can be given to persons whose little health, or the nature of their state, renders less capable of corporal austerities, is to apply themselves faithfully to the exercise of prayer, where in they may excellently practise the virtue of penance.

V. Many by reading the lives of saints, are touched with the desire of serving God, and of labouring in their salvation; but are discouraged when they see the penance of those mortified men. Let them know that this discouragement is a snare set for them by the devil, to retain them in tepidity; that God does not require them to imitate the austerity of the saints, but to follow the spirit thereof; and that then he will illuminate them with his light, and inspire them with what shall be most convenient for expiating their sins, and destroying in them whatever is opposite to the perfection of divine love. In the interim let them bless God in his saints, whose penance they admire; humbling and exciting themselves to do what lies in their power: for in heaven there are many mansions, and stars of different magnitudes.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ in the austerity of his life.

O Lord! the hope and desire of thy servants, the physician and remedy of all my evils! behold me here before the eyes of thy mercy, covered with an infinity of wounds, which thou seest much better than I do myself. I know the sin which occasions me them, the punishment I deserve, and the injury I have done thee; but thou alone knowest the enormity thereof, as thou art its only remedy. I neither can nor will conceal myself from thy justice; I heartily submit myself to every stroke of that paternal hand; and how ungrateful soever I am for the blessings I have received from thence, I still expect the chastisement and cure thereof. I discover my evils to thee O charitable physician! grant that I may know their greatness, that I may feel them, weep for them, and extinguish by my tears the fire of thy wrath. I know that I cannot present thee with anything but what thou mayest justly reject; that I bear my condemnation

ation written upon my interior and exterior senses, and in the
 tions of my life; and that *no man living shall be justified in thy*
ght, Ps. cxlii. 2. These eyes which I ought to elevate to thee,
 my God! are witnesses of the evil they have made me com-
 mit against thee; this tongue which begs thy pardon, is con-
 victed of having spoken a thousand times against thy will;
 these ears which hear thy word, are full of all the vanities
 which they have heard against thy law; and this whole body is
 marked with the characters of sin whereof it has been the
 instrument.

I cast myself at thy feet, O Lord! behold here the trans-
 gressor of thy law, the enemy of thy glory, the destroyer of
 thy works, the waster of thy goods, and the slave to his own
 passions; always inclined to evil, always opposite to good,
 insensible of penance, remiss in thy service, rebellious to thy
 light, and inflexible under thy chastisements. This unhappy,
 base, terrestrial, and impure soul, shall it presume to appear
 before thy infinite purity? Thou didst create it free, the mis-
 erable of itself; and by forsaking thee, it has subjected itself
 to a shameful servitude, become more attached to the flesh
 than to its God, wholly taken up with the pleasures of the
 body, deaf to thy inspirations, negligent in its duty, distract-
 ed in its thoughts, excessive in its desires, and full of all the
 miseries thou seekest and hatest: and for the height of its unhap-
 piness, separated from thee, O my God! who art the true
 God.

II. Thou knowest, O Lord! that I cannot even know the
 sins which draw thy wrath upon me. How then can I satisfy
 thee? and what can I offer thee when I appear before thee? I
 deserve nothing, O my God! but the chastisement and just
 condemnation which thou wilt pronounce against me, if thou
 lookest not upon me with the eyes of thy mercy. Thou hast
 borne with the wanderings of my youth, and the disorders of
 my life, with a most paternal goodness. Thou hast seen me
 running like a mad-man after the most shameful vices, atten-
 ded to all the occasions of offending thee, infatuated with a
 thousand vanities which I ardently pursued, in a profound for-
 getfulness of thy law and of my own salvation, possessed with
 the love of pleasures, and divided in several different affecti-
 ons, wherein thou hadst no share. Thou sawest me deceived,
 astray, lost, and ready to fall into hell, and thou hast
 withheld me on the brink of the precipice.

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I am that miserable sinner whom thou hast so long expected, though thou wast neither ignorant of my evils, nor of the blindness which hindered me from knowing them. Alas! I know them not yet. What shall I do then, O my God? For thou forbiddest me to despair, though I find in myself no ground of hope. O charitable shepherd of strayed sheep! who hast not been pleased that I should find without thee any remedy for the evils I have committed against thee, who hast given me thy merits to make me hope in thy mercy, and hast thyself taught me to return to thee by penance; open my eyes, that I may know and detest every thing in me that has ever displeased thee.

Immortal thanks be given thee, O divine shepherd of our souls! for the mercies which induced thee to take my sin upon thyself. I adore that infinite charity which made thee embrace so many labours for comforting me. I adore the watchings, hunger, thirst, and all the inconveniencies which thou hast endured for me. I adore that severe, austere, penitent, and laborious life, whereby thou hast expiated for thirty years, the forbidden pleasures, to which I had abandoned myself.—I adore that love which rendered thee so sensible of my miseries, that profound sorrow with which thou didst weep for my sins, and that fervent zeal with which thou didst satisfy for me. I adore those infinite merits which opened me the treasures of thy heavenly mercy, those divine sufferings which stopped the just vengeance of thy father, and those precious tears which merited me the pardon of my offences, and the eternal joy of the saints.

III. Give me, O Lord! the gratitude I ought to have for thy bounties. In those long nights which thou spentest in prayer, for obtaining me the blessings of heaven, those criminal nights wherein I was to offend thee were present to thy mind; in suffering hunger and thirst, thou thoughtest on my intemperances; in thy labours, thou foresawest my sloth; and when thou didst shed tears of affection over me, thou knewest the whole obduracy of my heart: full of that eternal love which delivered thee unto death for me, thou sawest me void of love for thee; amidst the austerities of thy life, thou beheldest the licentiousness and delicacy of mine; in the ideas of thy infinite wisdom, I was already running to my ruin whilst thou wast employed about my salvation. I fled from thee, when thou endeavouredst to allure me by the charms of thy love. I then took pleasure in sin for which thou wast resolved to suffer, and was attentive in indulging my body

hilst thou wouldst afflict thine. As a merciful father that wilt not the death of a sinner, but his conversion and life, thou labouredst in saving me, and I thought of nothing but that might ruin me. Ah, my God! behold here the sinner for whom thou hast suffered so much, the same who was then present to thy eternal knowledge, and is always poor, miserable, and faithless. I cast myself at thy feet such as I am, but with me I bring the merit of thy sufferings and the promise of thy mercies. I beg them of thee, O Lord! and to obtain them, I offer thee thy fastings, watchings, prayers, and austerities. Regard the evils which thou hast endured, and pardon me those I have committed. If thou wilt not that the sinner be condemned, because he is the work of thy hands, and because thou lovest every thing thou hast made, how canst thou suffer me to lose the fruit of so many labours, and that my merits should be unprofitable to me?

IV. Thou hast seen so much malice and enormity in my sins, that thou thoughtest thyself unable to blot them out but by my blood; thou judgedst thy sufferings necessary for remedying so great an evil; and thou hadst no repose, till I were fully healed. And I who am the author of my own evil, and bear it within myself, I eat, sleep, and live in tranquillity with my enemy; I regard him as the companion, and often even as the sweetness of my life. Commiserate my blindness, my divine goodness! and since thou didst penance so many years, for expiating my sins, I conjure thee by that same penance, to communicate the fruits of it to my soul; that is, perfect knowledge of my crimes, and a sincere sorrow for having committed them.

Dispel my darkness, O Lord! and destroy that thick wall which is between thee and me. Can there be any greater evil imagined than to take pleasure in doing what displeases thee, that for punishing it thou condemnest to eternal pains, those souls whom thou lovedst so much as to die for them on the cross? And yet I am so blind, that I account sin a small matter, and even sometimes regret because I cannot sin often as I would.

I know not how to ask what I desire, nor even know what ought to desire. If I were illuminated with thy light, O my God! how long soever my life were, I would spend it all solely in weeping, though I had never committed but one sin; and I am unconcerned after having committed so

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great a number of them. But since I neither know how to desire, nor how to ask thee for what is proper for me, O God of mercy! do thou ask that spirit which conducted thee during thy mortal life, why it made thee fast, watch, and suffer so much for my sins? and according to the answer it makes thee give me what I know not how to ask thee for. Cast thy eye upon thy own sufferings, O Lord! and grant me by them what they have merited for me.

V. Apply to thy service, O Lord! my senses and whole body. Thou knowest that this earthly body opposes my happiness and often stifles the holy seeds which thou sowest in my soul: give me strength and courage to resist this enemy; teach me to discover its artifices, and the malice of its excuses: for what can I do without thy help, against so formidable an adversary? Thou hast given me it for the companion of my pilgrimage, with obligation of nourishing it, lest it should faint; and of chastising it, that it may be subject: how do I observe that so necessary a medium! for I am much more inclined to flatter my body, than to correct it; and thou gives it the boldness of rising up against me. Fasten, O Lord! my flesh to thy cross, with the chains of thy love, and inspire me, by thy austerities, with the discretion, the will, and the strength of treating this body of sin, as thou wouldst have me to treat it.

Turn away my eyes, and shut them by thy fear, that they may not see vanity but only to despise it, nor fix their look upon what may hurt my soul. Set, O Lord! a watch to my mouth, and a door to my lips, *Pf. cxl. 3.* that I may never utter what I ought to conceal. *Death and life, according to the word, Prov. xviii. 2. are in the hand of the tongue;* grant that mine may never give any wound either to myself or to my neighbour; and that instead of speaking too much, I may be attentive to hear thee in a profound silence. Thou hast also said by one of thy prophets, *Jer. ix. 21.* that *the senses are gates by which death enters into our souls:* shut therefore my gates after thee, O my God! when thou hast entered into my heart, that thou mayest remain in it alone, and that nothing may enter therein which displeases thee. Destroy my vicious affections, and grant that I may use temporal things only for my necessity.

VI. Thou knowest, O Lord! the innumerable sins which the irregular love of my body has occasioned me to commit; all

me to confess them also before thee in the bitterness of my soul, in running over all the years of my life.

[One may accuse himself here of his sins in particular, and afterwards make the following prayer.]

O charitable physician! fortify my weakness, that I may be able to resist my corrupt inclinations. Thou seest the deep roots they have taken in my heart, and the fruits of death they produce therein. Pluck up these fatal roots, even to the smallest fibres; teach me how thou wouldst have me to serve thee, and give me the will and strength to execute what thou shalt teach me. Grant me grace to love what afflicts me, and to be pleased in tribulation, since I find therein the means of satisfying for my crimes. Grant that I may detest them with as much sorrow, as I have had pleasure in committing them; and that I may have as much love for penance as I have had for sin. But thou knowest better than I, O my God! what is proper for me: I resign myself to thee; pardon me what thou pleasest, and punish me as much as thou wilt. I only beg of thee the grace to desire nothing but what thou wilt do. Smite, burn, cut, and spare me not in time, that thou mayest spare me in eternity.

VII. O Jesus, my salvation and life! thou canst put an end to my evils. Thou desirest no less the familiarity and love of converted sinners, than of souls that have always been innocent. When *Magdalen* the sinner had cast herself at thy feet, and bathed them with her tears, thou didst regard her as one of thy faithful lovers, and she was soon allowed to pour out her perfumes upon thy head. *Paul* thy persecutor had no sooner expressed his readiness to obey thee, but heaven became his school, and thou didst vouchsafe to instruct him thyself. Raise up my dejected spirit also, O thou life of my soul, I embrace thy sacred feet; I desire to love thee, O divine Jesus! I desire to love thee, serve thee, and be wholly thine. Let my crimes be absorbed in the abyss of thy mercies, and may the very remembrance of them be lost.

It is true, O Lord! that my soul is unworthy to appear before such pure eyes, that it cannot defend itself from the corruption that surrounds it, and that it is always defiled with a thousand stains: but what can hurt whom thou protectest, what can overthrow whom thou supportest, what can divide whom thou unitest, and what can make him tremble whom

thou lovest? My soul, wholly miserable as it is, is no less thine, than the soul of the faithfulest of thy servants. If I consider myself, I ought to keep at a distance from thee, O my God! but when I regard thee, my heart desires thee, and my whole interior sighs after thee. Unite me to thee, and consume what displeases thee in me. With thee I can do all things, and shall fear nothing, because thou art my treasure, my glory, and the centre of my happiness.

O mother of God and refuge of sinners, faithful companion of the labours of your only son, the only one among pure creatures, exempt from all sin! have pity on this miserable sinner; obtain him the pardon of his sins, and the grace of serving your son faithfully. Blessed spirits! inhabitants of that heavenly *Jerusalem*, which was not only built for the just, but also for sinners, receive my desire of dwelling therein one day with you, and permit no earthly thing to separate me from your company. *Amen.*

XIII. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

His hunger and thirst after justice.

JESUS Christ has put hunger and thirst after justice (wherein the saints and all those live who have a real desire of pleasing him) in the number of those great evangelical virtues, which lead us securely to happiness. We must understand by the word *justice*, the sanctity of christian virtues, and the observation of the divine law, which justify us, remove us from sin, and convert us to God, which enlighten, purify, and dispose us to the perfection of his love, and to the communication of his gifts. This hunger and thirst after justice, which is nothing else but a fervent desire of sanctity, is so precious in the sight of God, that he has thought himself obliged to reward it with the greatest of all blessings, which is the perfect accomplishment of all our desires. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled; Mat. v. 6.* that is to say, because they shall enjoy that happy state, wherein God is loved and served without imperfection; for this is what the just desire above all things.

II. Now

II. Now this hunger after justice has two parts: the one regards our own sanctity, and the other the sanctity of our neighbour. By the first we desire to see ourselves disengaged from the love of the world and of ourselves, that we may no longer love any thing but God alone: and the second makes us wish that God may be known, loved, and served by all men. The recompence of the first is that meat wherewith Jesus Christ was fed, when he said: *My food is, that I do the will of him that sent me.* John iv. 34. For those souls that hunger after sanctity submit themselves in all things to the divine will, enjoy God in the exercises proper for their condition, till they possess him with plenitude in eternity. As to hunger after the perfection of our neighbour, it is seldom recompensed but in the other life; because nothing is to be seen in this but tepidity and disorder. And the saints shall not be satisfied therein, till there be no more vice to root out, nor tepidity to warm, nor any thing to be desired for our neighbour but eternal happiness, which he shall be already in possession of.

III. There is no virtue that gives greater pain to the servants of God, than this thirst after the salvation of our neighbour; for as to what concerns their own particular perfection, they are employed in rooting out of their heart all earthly love, in resisting the inclination of corrupt nature, in overcoming themselves, and in mortifying their flesh: but in regard to the salvation of their neighbour, when they have once begun to love God with their whole heart, the divine light increases in them, and makes them know how much God deserves to be loved. Then they become sensible of the misery of those who live in sin; are oppressed with a continual desire of seeing all men subject to the law of God; and are no less touched with the wandering of others, than with that wherein they themselves formerly lived.

But because this twofold hunger devours the saints in this life, God promises them as a reward to fill them in the other. This is St. *Augustin's* observation, *Serm. dom. in mont. c. 4.* who making the beatitudes of the gospel correspond to the gifts of the Holy Ghost, adds that *hunger after justice is nothing else but the gift of fortitude; because we need a great deal of it to root out of our hearts the love of the earth; and he who is touched with the divine love has need of a powerful help of the holy ghost, for supporting the grief which the ruin of his brethren occasions him, and for undertaking*

undertaking all the labours necessary to their conversion, without fearing either contradictions, affronts, or death itself. Thus is this virtue the principle of so many heroic actions, which the saints have done for the glory of God, and the salvation of their neighbour.

IV. Christ has suffered every thing that is most painful in this virtue: for the ardent zeal and continual thirst with which he burnt to see all men obey the divine law, practise virtue, avoid sin, allow themselves to be guided by the motions of the spirit of God, increase in his knowledge and love, and follow the measure of love which he had for his father. And because he regarded our evils as his own, he felt for us the privation of so many blessings, as lively as if he had been deprived of them himself.

This sense of our evils continued in him as long as his life. St. Paul, 2 Cor. xi. 28, &c. who had but a spark of that immense fire wherewith our Saviour was inflamed, said, *that the care of all the churches devoured him; that he was consumed interiorly by the scandals he beheld; that he was no longer his own, but the charity of Jesus Christ urged him to become all things to all men; that he esteemed himself happy in suffering for the elect; that though Jesus Christ was his life, and death his happiness, he knew not which he should love best, if he had his choice, whether to be dissolved and be with Christ, or to remain in the flesh for saving souls; that he loved Jesus Christ so far as to defy all creatures to separate him from thence; and yet the Holy Ghost was his witness that the obstinacy of the Jews penetrated him with such great sadness and continual sorrow of heart, that he wished to be an anathema from Christ for the love of his brethren.* Rom. ix. 2, 3.

If the apostle had these sentiments, what must those of Christ have been, whom an eternal love had brought upon earth for the salvation of all men? Who lived the space of thirty-three years in a continual hunger and thirst after our justice: to whom were present all the sins committed and to be committed, from the beginning of the world, to the consummation of ages; who distinguished their number, and weighed their enormity, by his divine wisdom; and who wept for them, in fine, in proportion to his love, and to the extreme desire he had of delivering us from them.

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This was to him so great a torment, and so incomprehensible a bitterness of heart, that it may be said, he suffered as many deaths as he beheld sins, and as he desired to save souls: for he preferred their salvation to his own life; and the offence against God was severer to him than the cross. He offered his blood for every one of us in particular, and the height of his grief was to foresee that his death would be unprofitable to many.

V. It is our duty to consider, after having so grievously offended God, what we owe to this divine Saviour, who wept so bitterly for the sins we daily commit with so much ease. But the perfect conviction of this truth is above all our views; and there is nothing but pure love that can make us comprehend the greatness of our obligations.

We know with what care and affection parents bring up their children; how greatly they are affected with seeing them abandoned to vanity, passions, and bad company; and despise the advice of those that love them. God often reproaches us in the same manner by his prophets. He complains that his children bestow on things which are pernicious to them, the love they owe to him; that they forsake him, offend him, and even make him subservient to their sins: and he complains so much the more justly thereof, as he loves us with much greater affection, than the tenderest mothers love their children.

What subject of confusion is it to us, to see on one hand Christ's anguish of heart for our salvation, and on the other our disgust of true happiness, and the blind passion which makes us run after perishable goods, loving them more than God!

There is no greater mark of reprobation, than to lose entirely the relish of celestial things. For God has given to all the faculties of our body and soul, the relish of such objects as are proper for them, that they may desire them more earnestly, receive them with more pleasure, and enjoy them with more profit. Hence it is that *the eye is not filled with seeing*, according to the testimony of the scripture, *Eccles. i. 8. neither is the ear filled with hearing*; that hunger and thirst render meat and drink more agreeable to us. It is the same with the other senses; and when any of them neither desires nor relishes

lishes what is proper for it, one may affirm that it is either very sick, or entirely destroyed.

Thus when the soul, which eternal goods alone can satiate, wholly occupied with terrestrial affections, happens to lose the relish of heavenly truths; when it is insensible thereof, indifferent about them, and has a disgust and aversion thereto, it is in evident danger of its eternal ruin. This evil, which the saints call insensibility, is that which God complains of by the mouth of his prophets, when he says, *Jer. v. 3. that he has stricken them, and they were not sorry; he has broken them, and they refused to receive discipline; they have hardened their faces more than the rock, and they would not return: that men like furies run into their own misfortunes without fear; lose God without disquiet; spend their time in forgetfulness of eternity; and fall in a moment into hell.*

VI. In expectation that God, moved with their so dangerous a state, will vouchsafe to draw them out of it by the light of his truth, and the sentiment of his love, I will advise them to what follows.

First, Let them praise and approve of virtue wherever they see it; although they be not yet resolved to follow it; let them be favourable to virtuous persons, and let them at least, if they are remote from sanctity, not become the persecutors of it, which would be partaking in this life of the malice of devils. Then God perceiving them approve in others, what they themselves have not the courage to do, will perhaps have pity on them as it often happens, and will fortify them by his grace.

Secondly, Let them blame and hate the hardness of their own heart, considering how different their conduct is from that of the servants of God: let them humble themselves and acknowledge the truth in his presence. By this means the divine light will not be quite extinguished in them, they will always keep close to God by some tie, and will not live peaceably in sin.

Lastly, Let them speak willingly of God with good people, whose conversation and example will by degrees soften their obduracy: and if the Lord discovers any ray of his light to them, let them read or consider the life of Christ, and their own obligations. This is a most efficacious remedy for drawing a soul out of its languishing state, advancing its desires, and exciting in it the love of those treasures which are contained

ained in Jesus Christ. But let those whom the divine goodness inspires with any sentiment of love, watch over themselves, and they will soon perceive that God does not cease to urge them interiorly, and to make them feel what he requires of them. They ought to render themselves attentive to his voice, and faithful in letting themselves be conducted thereby, lest a culpable neglect should give entrance to earthly desires, and that second evil be much more dangerous and incurable than the first.

Let them remember that God in the old law would see no other fire burn upon his altar than that which came from heaven, and yet he gave it only twice to his people : once in the desert under the government of *Moses*, and the other under *Nehemias*, at their return from the captivity of *Babylon*. At all other times they took great care to continue that sacred fire, and to hinder it from being extinguished. The desire of pleasing God, the hunger and thirst after justice is a heavenly flame, which the holy ghost kindles in our hearts ; but it ought to be entertained by ardent desires, fervent prayers, and holy actions : when they are neglected the fire is extinguished, and it is very difficult to kindle it again. But as *Nehemias*, after pouring upon the victims that thick water whereinto the first fire had been changed, waited till God should kindle it, and beheld at last the victims miraculously on fire ; so when we offer to God the small remains of our first desires, with humility and perseverance, he suffers himself to be moved, and awakens in us by his mercy, the fire of his love, and the spirit of penance.

VII. Hunger and thirst after justice produce zeal, so necessary to a christian, but so difficult to practise with that discretion wherewith it ought to be accompanied. As the salvation or ruin of souls often depends on the good or bad use that is made thereof, we ought to observe great circumspection herein ; because to judge of it by the exterior, it greatly resembles indignation and wrath ; it is therefore very easy, if we are not upon our guard, to push it too far, to admit humour to it, and to scandalise our neighbour, to whom the instrument of his conversion would be rendered thereby more hurtful than profitable.

Besides, zeal proposing for its end the glory of God and salvation of our souls, it sometimes happens that some persons, too ardent, being strongly persuaded of the obligation of following what they think they are inspired with, consider not sufficiently

ciently the time, place, manner, and the other circumstances which the sovereign zealot of all good, observes always in regard of us, with so great order and wisdom. In so much, that that harmony which consists in the union of zeal and prudence, being disturbed, there is nothing but tumult and confusion, to the prejudice of souls, and of the service of God.

The sole idea of zeal being well comprehended, shews the moderation and other qualities which it ought to have. For zeal in point of love, is nothing else but the care of preserving the good we possess, and of removing every thing that may destroy or alter it: and this care arises from the love and esteem we have for what we love. Thus holy zeal has its source in the true love of God, and in the esteem we have of his glory and the spiritual profit of our neighbour. Therefore it has the same qualities that St. Paul gives to charity, when he says, 1 Cor. xiii. 4. *Charity is patient, is kind; charity envies not, deals not perversely, is not puffed up: it is not ambitious, it seeks not its own interest, it is not provoked to anger, it thinks no evil, it rejoices not upon iniquity, but rejoices with truth: it suffers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, bears all things.* Behold the description of true zeal.

The duty of a zealous man is therefore first to love God and his neighbour, and then to seek only the glory of God and profit of his neighbour. But he ought to begin with himself to practise his zeal for the service of God, by destroying in his own heart and conduct, what may hinder the fruits of his zeal; and he may exercise it afterwards in regard of others. But to neglect our own salvation and to labour in that of our neighbour, to be circumspect in his affairs, and inconsiderate in our own, earnest concerning his faults, and unconcerned about our own, is having an irregular zeal, which profits little, is taken, and often falls into an excess of rigour; because passion has a greater share therein than virtue.

VIII. Christ gave this rule to the pharisees; when out of zeal for the law they accused the adulterous woman before him and would have her stoned: Jo. viii. 7 *he that is without sin among you, said he, let him cast the first stone at her.* For it is not from a just, discreet, and regular zeal, that he who deserves to be stoned, should resolve to stone another. A zealous man ought not to seek his own glory, otherwise his zeal degenerates into ambition; he ought to compassionate the evils of others, not to discourage him that has sinned by too much rigour, nor

reject his repentance, nor shun his conversation, nor refuse him the honour which is his due; but rather to help him, spare him, honour him, and endeavour to gain him, in order to cure him. Let him place himself below the sinner whom he desires to correct, and think himself a greater sinner than he, lest he should despise him, and thereby his zeal be changed by degrees into disgust and aversion.

IX. Those whom the duties of their state engage in the zeal of souls, are exposed on that head to certain particular dangers; for tho' they be vicious themselves, yet nevertheless they are obliged to exhort others to virtue; and then they have two extremities to fear, either of doing it weakly, for fear of drawing upon themselves the reproach of exacting from those whose models they ought to be, what they do not themselves; or of acting with too much severity, that they may appear more zealous than they really are: but of what manner soever they make use, they will do very little good, if their life is not exemplary. It is therefore most desirable, that superiors should submit themselves first to the law they impose on others; for by this means they will neither be scandalous nor too severe.

But though superiors should not perform what they preach, they ought not to be concluded from thence that they have not true zeal, or that their zeal is unprofitable to us; because Christ, who has redeemed with his blood the souls he has entrusted to those pastors, can give to those imperfect men for them, what they are unworthy of having for themselves. It is in this confidence that the faithful ought to be perfectly subject to the conduct of those who hold the place of God towards them. Both of them ought frequently to cast their eyes upon the life of the sovereign zealot of his father's glory, and of the salvation of our souls; they will learn in him the science of perfection, and the truth wholly pure, without any exception of persons: they will see in him an invincible patience in supporting the rudeness and ignorance of his disciples: a charming sweetness towards sinners, that he might gain them to himself; an heroic constancy in winking at sins, and in doing good to those who offended him; in fine, a zeal always full of charity, which made him take upon himself all the labour that we deserve, whilst in regard of us he disposed all things with sweetness, and heaped blessings even on those who were the most unworthy of them.

This

This is the model which he ought to follow who is employed in the salvation of souls. If his zeal is not meek, charitable and disinterested, though he should labour ever so much he will reap but very little fruit.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ in his hunger and thirst after justice.

O Source of all riches! I return thee a thousand thanks for having made me so poor, since my continual miseries urge me to have recourse to thee. For what is there in me that desires not thee, O my God! altho' my blindness hinders me from knowing my own desires? Thou art the author of all blessings, of the celestial, because they are included in thee, and of the terrestrial, because thy divine hand distributes them according to my corporeal necessities. It is from that liberal hand, that my eyes expect the light, without which they would be covered with darkness; 'tis from it my body begs the air it breathes, the bread it eats, and the water it drinks; health in sickness, the day for labour, and the night for rest; strength to move, success in affairs, and a remedy against all the evils wherewith it is surrounded.

That hand which created every thing that is good, distributes the same to us according to our necessities. When I am a captive, it delivers me; when I am in the midst of my enemies, it defends me; it protects me in danger; it prevents the evil that threatens me; and if it permits it to befall me; it affords me to support it. When only taken up with the cares of life and forgetting that most powerful hand, I seek for human supports, if that same paternal hand comes not to my help, even when I think not on asking it, and am wholly unworthy of it, all my endeavours are unprofitable; because thou hast been pleased that I should owe only to thee alone what is good in me. Thus does this whole terrestrial man send forth continual sighs towards thee, and the voice of his miseries incessantly implores thy mercy.

For what shall my soul do, which is so poor of its own nature, and still poorer thro' its fault? to whom shall it have recourse but to thee, O my God! thou bearest with it when it strays, bringest it back when it strays, inspirest it with virtue, and teachest it the truth; thou givest it the will to desire, strength to accomplish, and constancy to persevere. Thou givest it faith to know thee, hope to invoke thee, and charity to love thee. Without thee all its faculties suffer an insupportable hunger, because thou alone canst satiate them. The spiritual gifts which elevate it to thee, and the infinite blessings which thou hast created it capable of, can only come from thee. When my powers wander from thee by strange attractions they fall into indigence and error: because their natural tendency carry them towards thee, who art the comest and superabundant measure of their happiness. Every thing they seek elsewhere weakens and consumes them, and makes them lead a languishing life, in a region of famine and misery.

II. O thou only and perfect repose of thy miserable creature! cast upon me the eyes of thy mercy: re-establish by love what thou hast created by love, and what I have destroyed by ingratitude. For thou hast made me for thyself alone, and shouldst alone be my true and solid happiness. Thy hands have formed me in such a manner that the interior and exterior man depend equally on thee, that they need thy assistance every moment, and that my body and spirit are oppressed with a continual hunger: and the reason is, that when I seek thee, O my sovereign felicity! I may relish thee more joyfully, and receive thy benefits in greater abundance.

But thou perceivest in me, O Lord! something monstrous: believe this truth, I acknowledge, and confess it; and yet I shudder from all sides those perishable goods which slip out of my hands; I embrace the wind, feed myself with air and smoke, and am always hungry, but not after thee. I continually desire, but desire not thy blessings. I know however, that poor and miserable as I am, that *better is one day in thy house above thousands spent far from thee; Ps. lxxxiii. 11.* because the peace and consolation which I enjoy with thee in one single day, recovers my whole strength, makes me forget all my miseries, supplies all my wants, and fills my heart with a thousand sweetneses: whereas of all the other days of my life, I cannot reckon so much as one that resembles those happy days which are spent with thee. I also grant,

grant, blessing thy mercy, that I have had very few agreeable days out of thy service; and still there remains nothing within me of these unhappy days but repentance, and the desire of being able to expel from my soul the mortal poison they have left therein.

III. *Thy mercy, O divine goodness! is better than many lives* Ps. lxii. 4. because all those lives are full of miseries, and lead to death. Extinguish in me this vile and earthly life which keeps me in a shameful slavery, that being restored to the liberty of thy children, I may henceforth love nothing but thee alone. Shew thyself to this blind soul, O pure light that it may see the filth wherein it is plunged, and begin to desire thy help. Inspire me with the fear of pleasures which may hurt me, and the dislike of those which I have loved. Give me that interior purity which shews the value of every thing, lest I should lose thro' my ignorance the relish of those spiritual blessings thou communicatest to them that love thee.

I dare not, O my God! express by my words the baseness, indignity, shame, and vanity of those things I have hitherto loved, and which I have sought after with such a hunger and thirst as I ought to have had only for thee! I only confess before thy most pure eyes what they clearly see in me, that there is nothing so holy, but what I am capable of corrupting, unless thou defendest it against me.

IV. O divine Jesus! who knowest me so perfectly; thou art my saviour, redeemer, and the remedy of all the evils thou seest in me, and sufferest with an infinite patience. Look upon the abyss of my miseries, that it may draw down that abundance of thy mercies. If thou plungest me into this second abyss, I shall come out pure, changed, and renewed, in order to begin to love thee with all the tenderness of my heart, and to serve thee with all the fervour of my desires. Remember that thou hast said; *invoke me in the day of tribulation; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.* Ps. xlix. 15. Behold now, O Lord, the day of tribulation; not of a temporal tribulation, but that is more profitable to me than worldly prosperities; but the day of dangers wherein my miseries have thrown me. invoke thee, O my God! from the deep abyss wherein I am fallen, and out of which I cannot come without thy help.

Have mercy on me, be my deliverer, and purify my desires, that I may seek thee with an ardent hunger, and be filled with thy love.

finding thee. *From the depths I have cried to thee, O Lord! Lord hear my voice. Let thy ears be attentive to the voice of my petition,* Pf. cxxix. 1. May I seek only thee, may I find nothing but thee, and mayest thou alone be my food and life; may I offer thee nothing but pure praises in this valley-of tears, that my soul, disengaged from earthly affections, may rejoice only in thee!

V. Thou canst not refuse me, O father of mercies! what I beg; for thou whisperest to my heart that what I beg of thee, is what thou art willing to give me. I earnestly entreat thee to destroy every thing in me that opposes the communication of thy gifts. I know that I am unworthy of this favour; but grant, O Lord! to thy love and my desires what thou canst not give to my merits. Thou owest me nothing, I deserve nothing; I acknowledge also that I have rendered myself positively unworthy of all thy favours, by the baseness of those affections which thou seekest and hatest in me. But remember, O charitable father! that for the space of thirty-three years thou wast inflamed with the desires of doing me good, of converting me, and of elevating my love and desire unto thee. Remember those amorous disquiets which thou offeredst to thy eternal father, for expiating my luke warmness; and since that thirst after my salvation tormented thee so many years, and so often solicited thee in my behalf, satisfy it, O Lord! by granting me what it begs for me from thy mercy.

VI. It is thou, O true friend of our souls! that suppliest us with every thing we want. When thou livedst with us on earth, and beheldest the corruption of our desires, thou employedst the purity of thine for their remedy. It was for that reason that thy eyes shed so many tears, that thy ears were always open to the voice of our necessities, that thy mouth cried out all the day, and that thou spentest the night also in sighs before thy father for the salvation of all men. It was for that end that thou lamentest continually over the obduracy of our hearts, and that thine, always tender and charitable, had no pleasure more ardent than to mollify them, and to kindle the divine love therein, nor sorrow more sensible, than to see that sacred fire extinguished in any of us. In fine, thou sufferedst that interior hunger and thirst for me and for every one in particular, as if thou hadst had but one single person to save.

Alas!

Alas! what are we, O Lord, to cause thee so much care and pains? what expectest thou from me, to endure such great anguish, and to burn with so ardent a thirst? Why, O my God! dost thou so torment thy love? why dost thou not satisfy it in me? hast thou then lost that infinite power? why dost thou indulge my free-will so far as to allow me to ruin myself, and to make thee suffer so much? Yes, O Lord! in this moment, I remit it into thy hands, resign it entirely to thee, and intend for the future that it concur with thee in thy desire of being loved by thy creature.

VII. I love thee, O my God; and desire to love thee daily more and more. Far from me be all other love; for thou alone deservest to be loved by my whole heart. I know that it is what thou wouldst have of me: for as thou hast ordained, that when I merit any thing with thee, I cannot be worthily recompensed, unless thou thyself art my recompence; thou claimest also, and with great justice, to be alone worthy of my love. What, O Lord! dost thou give thyself to me, and shall I after that basely deliver myself up to things unworthy of a heart capable of loving thee! and since thou elevatest my soul unto thee, permit it not to fall back again into its ancient unworthiness. I offer thee all that is in it, and every thing that depends on it. I receive thee as my only happiness, receive me also as a good which thou hast purchased. Preserve me as thy inheritance; lose me no more, and let me never lose thee, O my Lord! my God, and sovereign happiness.

AN EXPOSITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

In relation to his hunger and thirst after justice.

YE heavens, earth, angels, and men! join with me. Come ye works of the Lord, let us all together praise, adore and love him who has created us all. We bless thee, O Lord! and we beg of thee the hunger and thirst of thy love, by the same words which thou hast prescribed to us: thou wilt acknowledge them, since they come from thee; thou wilt

wilt hear them favourably, since thou hast dictated them with a design to hear them; and thou wilt grant us by them the ardent desires of loving and serving thee, since it is for that reason thou hast commanded us to say :

II. *Our father.* Eternal father, almighty father, merciful father, and charitable father, who carriest us all written in the book of thy love : who art in such a manner *ours*, that there is nothing in thee but what is *our* own, and in such a manner *father*, that thou regardest us all as thy well-beloved children.

III. *Who art in heaven.* By that same love thou expectest us in the celestial palace where thou makest thy abode ; raise up our thoughts thither. If thy wisdom keeps us at a distance from thence during the time of this exile, it is not that we should be separate from thee ; but to make us desire our country, to transport us thither one day, and to fill us with joy by the sight of thy countenance, carry all our desires along with thee, that having no longer any thing but disgust of earthly things ; all that is in us may sigh after the happiness of possessing thee.

IV. *Hallowed be thy name.* Make us comprehend the greatness, majesty, and affection of this name of father, that we may esteem ourselves happy in being thy children. Bring the whole world to the knowledge of thee ; let our souls, bodies, affections, works, and words shew what we are to thee ; let us seek nothing but thy glory and service ; and let us appear in all things the true children of so holy a Father.

V. *Thy kingdom come.* Remove from thy children what separates them from thee, and reign thou alone in our souls. Consider, O merciful father ! the dangers wherein we live, shorten the time of our banishment, and call us to thee. Why wilt thou suffer thy children to love thee and not to behold thee ? But if it be necessary to prolong the time of our exile, thou mayest at least dwell in our hearts, whilst it continues. Come into them then, O father full of goodness ! reign therein, O sovereign Lord ! and establish thy abode in them. If my soul is so happy as to become thy kingdom here, I consent for thee to delay me as long as thou pleasest the possession of thy heavenly kingdom : for in fine I desire only thee, either in heaven, or on earth ; and provided thou

reignest in me with an absolute dominion and an unbounded power, my desires will be accomplished.

VI. *Thy will be done.* Come eternal father! extend thy power, possess all, and grant that all may obey thee. What is our being, and what is it good for, if it is not subject to thee? Thou hast said, O Lord! that we must *fear thee, and keep thy commandments*; for this is all man. Eccles. xii. 13. All thy commands are the will of a father full of love, of a father always attentive to our necessities. Why are we then so blind as to abandon ourselves to the will of any but of thee? May this righteous, holy, beneficent, and perfect will, reign on earth as it does in heaven; and may every will which is contrary to it, become subject thereto! Under that divine will the blessed spirits in heaven live content, in tranquillity, without fear, in the sure possession of all blessings. Why is it then that men on earth, where they are encompassed with dangers and enemies, trust to the arm of the flesh, and to weak, false, and inconstant wills? Banish from the earth, O Lord! all that vain confidence, and subject it to thy will, as heaven is subject thereto.

VII. *Give us this day our daily bread.* Since the support of our interior life consists in obedience, and thy will and grace are the nourishment of our souls, grant that being daily fortified and renewed, by that spiritual food which we receive and always desire, we may sigh after thee with a constant hunger. But it is time, O Lord! to begin thy work, give us *this day that supersubstantial bread*, for we are not sure of living to-morrow; and continue to give us it daily, till we arrive at that *great day* which is no more succeeded with any night.

VIII. *And forgive us our trespasses.* Let not my sins hinder thee from granting me this favour: I ask thee not, O Lord! to discharge me from the obligation of loving and serving thee; this is a debt I would always pay, and from which I do not intend to be ever discharged; but remit me those I have contracted, by robbing thee of the honour which was thy due, and giving it to creatures. I cannot satisfy for what I owe thee on that account, but by withdrawing my love from all created objects; I give it to thee, O my God! wholly cold, frozen, and imperfect as it is, purify it so as to be capable of pleasing thee.

As we forgive them that trespass against us. Thou hast promised me, O Lord! to pardon me when thou obligedst me to pardon those that have offended me. Since thou wilt have me to be so liberal, poor as I am, how canst thou be reserved in forgiving me, being so powerful as thou art? I heartily pardon in obedience to thy commands; pardon me also in accomplishment of thy promise.

IX. *And lead us not into temptation.* Finish thy work, O Lord! take care of me, do thou conduct me, and deliver me from the temptations which disturb me. Thou wilt not, O eternal father! that thy children be tempted above their strength; and thou knowest what we lose if it happens that we are overcome. Tempt us, try us, according to thy will; but assist us, and triumph in us by the force of thy love.

X. *But deliver us from evil. Amen.* Thou knowest, O Lord! how frail and corrupt this flesh of ours is, with how many evils it is encompassed, and to what dangers we are exposed in this exile. Thou seest we can do nothing without thy assisting grace. Thou hast promised thy children, O heavenly father! that living water, which from our hearts, whereinto thou pourest it, flows unto eternal life, that is to say, unto thee. My soul pants after that salutary water, and after that bread of life; appease its hunger and thirst; that being fed and satisfied with thee alone, it may have nothing but disgust for every thing else.

O mother of mercy! who always desired the eternal goods, and were always filled therewith; have compassion on the children of *Eve*, banished from their own country, and obtain for us by your merits that heavenly fire, which is to be the whole consolation of our banishment. Blessed spirits, who desire with assurance fresh communications of bliss, and enjoy your desires with plenitude; make us continually desire the blessings which you possess, that by your intercession we may one day possess them with you in the church triumphant.
Amen.

XIV. SUFFERING of CHRIST,

During his Public Life.

The obligation of living among men whose manners were so contrary to his.

HUNGER and thirst after justice in the servants of God, is frequently attended with another very grievous pain, which is to live among people whose conduct is infinitely contrary to their own: notwithstanding they cannot avoid them, because the charity of Jesus Christ urges them to make him known, loved, and served by all men. They have a lively sense of the obligation they lie under of labouring for the salvation of their neighbour, and of the ingratitude there would be in refusing God what they owe him. Thus in beholding on one side the forgetfulness of God wherein men live, and on the other their attachment to the world, with that great number of sins which are daily committed, they are pierced with sorrow; but there never was any like to that of our Saviour. This is what obliged him to conceal his majesty, to chuse a poor and common life, to have nothing singular in his exterior, and to live undistinguished among men.

He lived in a poor cottage, which was opened to every one, that he might give an example to all of an innocent, modest, and regular life; being peaceable and subject to the law of God, without discovering that greatness and divine wisdom whose plenitude he possessed. He remained in silence, because the time of speaking and working miracles was not yet come. They had little consideration for his person, and small esteem for his sanctity, because he was regarded as an ordinary man; but as he was sensibly affected with the disorders, malice, quarrels, violences, injustices, falsehoods, blasphemies, and licentiousness of the *Jewish* people. He beheld with an extreme pain, the ambition of the great, the hypocrisy of the priests, the vanity of the doctors of the law, the avarice of the magistrates, the vexation of the innocent, the oppression of the poor, the pride of the rich, the contempt of virtue and truth, and the general forgetfulness of God and salvation.

II. It cannot be imagined what the majesty of his divine person had to suffer, amidst so many brutish and clownish men; his sanctity with a vicious and profane nation; his zeal for his father's glory, in so great a liberty of sinning; in a word, all our Saviour's perfections contributed to torment him; and all the disorders committed before his eyes, were so many wounds wherewith they pierced his heart. He could have spared himself the sight of them by retiring like *St. John Baptist*, into solitude; but being come to save men, that live with one another, he contented himself with experiencing a solitary life, by a retreat and fast for forty days; waiting till the holy ghost would inspire many servants of God, in succeeding ages, with the institution and practice thereof, and chose for himself a common life; because he had more occasions of suffering therein, and was to be the master and model of all men.

III. But it seems that by this sociable life which he led on earth, he designed particularly to teach us three things. First, The manner of treating profitably with men. Secondly, The mildness wherewith we ought to bear with their faults. Thirdly, The fortitude with which we ought to resist their bad examples, and despise their false judgments.

There are some general rules in the holy scripture, concerning the first of these instructions. Christ establishes one of them when he says: *so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father, who is in heaven.* Mat. v. 16. He will have to us live in the sight of all people, with so much purity as never to transgress the divine law; contrary to the conduct of certain persons, who approve in secret the precepts which God has given us, but in public act the libertine, for fear of displeasing worldlings. To those loose christians it is that Christ declares: that *he will deny them before his father, since they deny him before men.* Mat. x. 33. As he is to glorify his faithful servants in the sight of the whole world, at the last judgment; he also justly requires them to glorify him on earth.

It is not sufficient to have good intentions; we must shew them by good works, that we may not scandalize our neighbour. For *woe to that man by whom scandals come; it is better for him that a mill-stone be put about his neck, and he cast into the sea.* Luke xvii. 1, 2. Our Lord requires us to give good example, not that we may be the more esteemed, but that God may be

be glorified thereby, without whom we cannot bear any fruit no more than the branch, which withers when it is cut off from the vine, and is no longer fit for any thing but to be burnt.

The apostle *St. Paul* gives us another rule, which is to *owe no man any thing, but that of loving one another*; for he that loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law, Rom. xiii. 8. By these words he teaches us the holy freedom, and christian independency, in which we ought to live amongst men, by following not our own humour, but our duty. For when we are actuated only by fancy, and without any regard to those with whom we live, we offend them; we are obliged afterwards to make them satisfaction, and we have the less freedom thereby.

This rule teaches us also how we ought to behave in friendship, wherein we must engage ourselves in such a manner, as to do nothing for our friends, that is contrary to our conscience; because the complaisance we have for men, ought to be founded on the love of God, and on charity towards our neighbour. On the love of God, to observe his law faithfully, without any human respect, in all occasions; and on charity towards our neighbour, in doing good to every one as far as we are able, but always from the motive of divine love.

If we have little power, let us have a great deal of good will; and let us be more intent on seeking occasions of obliging, than reasons for excusing ourselves therefrom. We shall testify thereby that we are the true children of that heavenly father, who is the author of all blessings. In fine, let us be such towards all men, as we wish them to be towards us, by doing and procuring them, by our words and actions, all the good and all the advantages that lie in our power; with less regard to the quality of their persons, than to their necessities.

IV. As to what regards the choice of friends, *St. Paul* 1 Cor. v. 15. forbids us to eat with the wicked, unless it be to do them good; lest we should imitate or seem to approve of their conduct. But if zeal for their salvation obliges us to treat with them, charity will teach us the time and manner of doing it, without prejudice to ourselves, or scandal to our neighbour in regard of familiarity, we ought not to have any if possible, but with those who have the same inclinations for virtue that we have; if we find none such, it will be good

to behave civilly, mildly, and affably to all, and not to be familiar with any. Those whom we consult for our conduct, ought to be secret, prudent, and well intentioned, capable of entering into our necessities, of considering our good and ill as their own, of making us follow good advice, and of giving authority to their counsels by their virtue.

But as in common life there are many occasions of doing good, so there are many also of offending God: he that resolves to live among men, ought to preserve the purity of his manners with extreme care; for then God will not fail giving him light and grace to conduct himself without danger to himself, and with profit to others. Let him be upon his guard also against a very common, but mistaken notion, which is to imagine, that the practice of virtues, and exercise of piety, are incompatible with an active life; and therefore put off the amendment of his life to a time of repose and solitude, which perhaps he will never have. This is an excuse suggested by corrupt nature, which seeks always how to shake off the yoke of virtue. It is known by experience how dangerous this illusion is, and that he who is not desirous of being holy every where, is not so any where.

If therefore you would labour one day in retirement with success to your spiritual advancement, neglect it not in the embarrassment wherein you are at present. God deserves to be served in all the times of our life, and there is none of which we must not give him an account. Jesus Christ our model made none of these distinctions; among men he was always attentive to the will of his father. His life was so pure, that he defied his enemies to convict him of sin; John viii. 46. and never was any thing more admirable than his moderation, his meekness, his tranquility, his recollection, and all the marks of a perfect holiness, in the midst of a restless people, that followed him in crowds even into the desert.

Let the servants of God remember therefore, in the commerce they are obliged to have with the world, to preserve, after the example of our Saviour, an interior spirit, attention to God, and fidelity in the practice of virtues. For the proper and natural effect of the actions of Christ, when we consider them with a design of imitating them, is to communicate to ours the light, order, efficacy, and sanctity, with which they were filled.

V. We

V. We learn also by his example, to bear with the faults of those among whom we live. For it is of him the prophet *Isaiah* tells us: that *he shall not cry, nor accept persons, neither shall his voice be heard abroad—he shall not be sad nor turbulent.* xlii. 2. He heard, and saw many disorders, was sensibly touched therewith, and yet he kept silence, because his time to remedy them was not come.

It is a great virtue to know how to suffer and be silent, without which one cannot possess interior peace, which is chiefly necessary when we are obliged to converse with persons whose manners, conditions, and actions are different from ours: for most men cannot bear to be reproved, either because they do not think that what pleases them can displease others, or because the justest and most moderate contradiction, always offends the delicacy of their pride.

To see continually and take no notice of things which displease, and which with reason one disapproves, is one of the most grievous pains of life, particularly for good people, when God draws them to him, and raises them by the communication of his spirit above human sentiments, and the corrupt views of flesh and blood. What care soever the servant of God then takes to become all things to all men to gain all, a life so contrary to that of sinners, often excites against him murmurings, contempt, and persecution. But how severe soever that trial may be, let him not change his conduct, but be persuaded that the devil raises this storm only to shake him in his holiest resolutions, and to make him at last abandon his undertakings, and yield to the temptation.

Therefore he ought then to have recourse to Christ, to beg of him continually his light, that he may not lose the interior sight of truth; to arm himself with constancy that he may not quit the work of God; to humble himself before him, and acknowledge himself worthy of the contempt of all men; who revenge thereby the injuries he has done to God. Let him give him thanks for the desire he has to serve him; and for the other gifts which he has received from his bounty: let him say to himself that he is more obliged to bear with others, than others are to bear with him; that heaven is to be purchased by patience; and that if others were to bear with his faults, they would take the deeper root in him.

Let him hold it for certain, that since the success of his labour, and the conversion of sinners whom he beholds perishing with so much sorrow does not depend on him; he ought not to be disturbed thereby, but charitably to compassionate their misfortune. Let him in fine be comforted by these words of *Isaiah*: xxx. 15. *If you return and be quiet, you shall be saved: in silence and in hope shall your strength be.* For the relief of good people is to be silent, and to expect the moment of the Lord, without that they cannot be easy; and as they find still in their own conduct many faults, they ought to be their own judge, and not wonder at their not gaining upon others what they have not yet obtained over themselves.

VI. The third thing which our Saviour teaches us, is not to regulate our lives by the sentiments or examples of those among whom we live; unless they serve God, and seek him in the simplicity of their hearts. *St. Paul* says on one hand, *Gal. i.* 10. *that if he did yet please men, he should not be the servant of Christ;* and he affirms on the other, *1 Cor. ix. 22.* *that he became all things to all men, that he might save all;* in order to teach us, that we must so accommodate ourselves to the weakness of men, with a design of gaining them to Christ, as never to depart from that pure virtue which Christ has taught us. This is a medium very difficult to be observed in the commerce of the world, wherein the most virtuous are too often drawn away by the multitude, relaxing themselves by degrees from their first fervour, and becoming at last like others. For we must have a well established virtue, for supporting the continual opposition of parents, friends, and those among whom we constantly are; for doing in their sight the contrary of what they do and love; and for being resolved to displease them, in order to please God alone.

Such are those vigorous souls whom God commonly fills with the treasures of his grace, and concerning whom the royal prophet cries out; *Pf. xxx. 20.* *How great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord! which thou hast hid for them that love thee: thou hast perfected it for them that hope in thee, in the sight of the children of men;* that is to say, for those whom human judgments withdraw not from the truth which thou interiorly teachest them. *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy countenance from the disturbance of men: thou shalt protect them in thy tabernacle from the contradiction of tongues.*

Let

Let a good man therefore despise the discourse of worldlings when he gives them no just ground of murmuring: let him be attentive to his duty, shutting his ears to every thing else, and preparing himself to resist with constancy the wise and powerful of the world, in what regards the perfection of a christian life. We are incapable of this resolution, whilst we continue to have human views and pretensions; and he alone can put it in execution, who seeks only the glory of God, and considers as unworthy of himself, all that greatness and authority which the gospel rejects. If he is accused of delusion and singularity, let him not wonder thereat, but on the contrary persuade himself that his accusers are deceived, and that one is not singular when he has Christ, the apostles, the martyrs, and an infinite number of other saints on his side.

VII. This instruction regards also the religious who live in communities. Tho' they all make profession of the same kind of life, yet we ought to imitate only those who fulfil the obligations of their state. Let them therefore distinguish themselves by their obedience towards their superiors, their patience in contradictions, their sweetness in regard of every one, by the simplicity and humility of their conduct, the desire of perfection, and the exact observation of their rules: and living after this manner is being singular, I advise them to be so. But to obtain peace, they must observe the following maxims,

1. Let them not seek the favour of those that govern them, but obey them with a perfect submission. Let them observe the first of these maxims, that they may not give to man a heart already consecrated to God; and the second, that they may honour God in the person of their superior.

2. Let them maintain no friendship which may distract their mind, or disturb their heart.

3. Let them seek nothing in religion but the peace of the heart and the purity of the soul.

4. Let them behave well even towards those that have used them ill, and know, that to regard any one as an enemy in the house of God, is a source of division and trouble.

5. Let them tenderly love the most contemptible of their brethren, and bear towards them a holy desire of doing them good.

good; for the less they are in the eyes of men, the more power they have with God; and hold in religion the same rank as Christ held on earth.

6. Let them not be dazzled by the authority of those who possess the first places. The lowest employments are no less estimable in religion, than the highest; and to think ourselves honoured, because we are above others; or despised, because we are the last of all, is a sentiment altogether unworthy of a religious person.

7. Let them apply themselves with freedom to the practice of pure virtue, in peace and silence, even tho' others should neglect it.

8. Let them support themselves by hope in their domestic troubles and persecutions; and be persuaded that heaven is promised them at that price. This indeed is an extremely severe sort of cross, as well because it is continual, as because it is ill used by ones own brethren, and that those who pass for virtuous, persecute virtue itself under pretence of zeal.

9. When calumny imposes any evil upon them which they have not done, or gives a bad turn to the good they do, by making them pass for hypocrites, let them pray for their accusers, and suffer this injustice in silence and peace, with meekness and perseverance; let them humble themselves before God, because they have need of so violent a remedy for the cure of their wounds, and because it is necessary for their salvation, that the servants of God should become their persecutors.

10. Let them carefully preserve the love of sufferings; let them always regard them with esteem and respect, judging themselves even unworthy of having any share in the chalice of our Lord; and let them often beg of God never to lose the light which discovers to them, that the way of the cross is the best and safest for them. Let them endeavour to do good to all, and to serve them as their masters and superiors, without expecting from them either favour, praise, or recompence: and let not the evil that is said of them turn them out of the right road.

11. If they see that regular discipline relaxes, let them at that time seriously apply to the reformation of themselves; and

and consider that they are come into religion to serve others and to bear with them, and not to be spared therein. If any wrong is done them, let them not complain of it, but look upon themselves as slaves whom their masters may maltreat when they please. Those who have not these sentiments, and on whom such wholesome advice makes no impression, hide a prophane and secular heart under a religious habit.

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ bearing with the manners of those amongst whom he lived.

O Master of eternal truth! O charitable shepherd of strayed sheep! O divine Jesus, repairer of our losses, what then must that love be which binds thee so closely to us, that in spite of our corruption, which thou hast so great an abhorrence of, thou canst not separate thyself from us! Thou hast filled heaven with angels, who praise thee, love thee, adore thee, and serve thee without interruption; and thou descendest from heaven upon earth to live the space of thirty years amongst men who have neither respect nor love for thee. Thou dwellest in the midst of a disorderly, unjust, and impious nation, where thou beholdest nothing but sin.

Who has obliged thee, O my God! thus to change thy manner of acting in regard of men? Thou camest to find *Adam*, after his disobedience, in the terrestrial paradise, and drove him out of it; thou didst descend at the clamour of the sins of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, which was come unto thee, and destroyed those infamous cities. When thou didst march through the deserts in the midst of the *Israelites*, *Moses* had great difficulty to appease thy wrath, ready to exterminate that ungrateful people; and yet almost all those who had come out of *Egypt* perished at last in the desert, and saw not the promised land. But now, O Lord! thou who art the same omnipotent, eternal, and infinite God, comest to converse with men; thou nearly seest their sins, dwellest in their houses, walkest through their streets, hearest their blasphemies, and dost not punish them. Are their crimes less crying than

of Sodom? Hast thou now less abhorrence of sin, than thou hadst then? or dost thou love us more than thou lovedst thy ancient people?

Ah! how great reason had *David* to say of thee, in consideration of thy goodness towards us: *Pf. lxxxiv. 2, 3. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people: thou hast covered all their iniquities. Thou hast mitigated all thy wrath: thou hast turned away from thy wrath of thy indignation; and to deliver us from thence, thou hast turned all its rigour against thyself. Thou hast chosen rather to draw us by thy presence, than to confound us by thy anger. Thou didst not take any notice of all our iniquities; thou hadst compassion on us in all our pains, and dwellest with the importunities, humours and extravagancies of the whole world; but thou shinedst in darkness, O divine light! and the darkness did not comprehend thee, John i. 5. Thou wast the father of all without being loved; the God of all without being honoured; the treasure of all without being esteemed; the happiness of all without being desired; the shepherd of all without being followed; and the sovereign good of all without being sought after.*

II. Happy would he have been who could have approached thee, conversed with thee, seen thee, and heard thee, during the whole time of thy mortal life! But art thou now, O my life of my soul! less sweet, less affable, and less accessible? Thou art still the same; thou seest me, and I am near thee. Thou art so near me, that thou conversest with me in the bottom of my heart. Thou winkest at my sins; and waitest till I am attentive to thy voice, and careful in loving and serving thee. Be not in me, O my God! as a light in darkness; enlighten my soul, and pierce it quite through with the rays of thy splendor. If I had presumed to desire any thing, and had it been permitted me to have begged a favour of thy majesty, I should have esteemed myself happy that I could have been the last in thy house, and were to abide always at the door, that I might kiss the marks of thy feet, and the ground whereon thou didst walk.

III. The royal prophet well understood that one single day spent in this manner, was better than a thousand lives. But it was too little for satisfying thy love, O infinite goodness! when thou comest to seek me thyself, thou enterest into my house, thou dwellest in my heart, and I find thee therein when I am alone; thou overlookest the evil thou seest there, and in spite of

of all my miseries, thou hast not yet abandoned me. It is because thou art willing to heal me, provided I would return to thee, love thee, and converse with thee.

Turn therefore towards thee, O God of love! all my desires, affections, and thoughts: for what can I desire, what canst thou give me better than thyself? Thou art the most precious of all thy goods; one cannot desire any thing beyond thee, and thou givest me all that thou art. When am I, O my God! when I seek any thing but thee? What do I when I love not thee? Where are all my senses, when I am not attentive to thee? Enlighten me, O eternal light! speak to me, O divine shepherd? may I hear thy voice, may I know it, and may I never follow any other.

Is it possible that I should be so miserable, and yet so near thee at the same time? that I should be so remote from thee and thou be in me? Thou seest, O Lord! my miseries, know my necessities, and feelest my losses. Harken to the voice of my poverty, have pity on the evils I endure; and since I find thee here in secrecy and silence, cast upon me the eyes of thy mercy. Grant that I may not live with thee without thinking on thee; but let my whole interior embrace thee; let me hear thee, follow thee, and desire only thee; and let me find in thee alone all the sweetness and repose of my life.

IV. I confess before thee, O my God! all the evils which thou seest, that thou mayest heal them in such a manner as thou pleasest; may I be sensible of them, may I avoid them, and may thy goodness pardon me them. Thou hast justly banished me from heaven; but thou wouldst have me to desire it, to seek it, to merit it, and to make it the first of my concerns. Thou hast expressly commanded me to do so, and wilt require a strict account of me herein. And as for me, I make myself a heaven of this valley of tears, am wholly possessed with the vanities I see, and forget thee.

My sole application is to please men with whom I live, and I am so much afflicted with having displeased them, as my happiness depended on them. I esteem their praises as if they were the deserved recompence of my actions: I am sorrowful when they are discontented with me, and rejoice when they are satisfied with me. I am ashamed with being like the world, with being humble, meek, patient, and with despising the judgments of men. I esteem what they approve, although it

contrary to thy law. For satisfying them I neglect thy service, and depart from the purity of thy doctrine. Pardon me, O divine mercy! that little respect I have had for thee. Thou knowest how much greater power the discourses of men have over me, than the consideration of thy majesty. I think myself great when they esteem me, although thou despisest me. I am humble when they reject me, although I be agreeable to change. Thus I overturn the truth, and confound all the perfection and purity of virtue.

I do with great application every thing that appears laudable before their eyes, and if they refuse me their approbation, I am grieved thereat. I persevere in all the exercises of christian piety, whilst they see me; and before thee, O Lord! I am lukewarm, languishing, and am contented with the little I do for thee, without considering what I owe thee. What advantage then do I find in the commerce of the world, O thou God of my soul! but to live among mortal, miserable, and vanished men, superficial in their views, uncertain in their opinions, blind in the knowledge of the truth, deceived in the judgments they pass of good and evil, obstinate in vice, wavering in virtue, and living in a continual disquiet? Those who are above others, are neither better nor less miserable. Malice and misery are to be found every where: what then can I expect from them? O my Lord and my God!

V. I shall be judged according to what thou seest in me, O just judge of the living and the dead! men see only the exterior, they go not into the bottom of any thing, nor do they know truth; and yet in deference to their judgments, I lose myself and abandon thee. Deliver me from the eyes of men, they are eyes of basilisks, which kill by their secret poison every thing they look upon. What do I hope for when I put my trust in them? They will not do what it is not in their power to do; and if they can do any thing, they always want power in that is most necessary for me. When they use me ill, and instead of knowing how to take the good I do them, they complain of me, ill-treat me, and persecute me; I find no consolation but with thee; and thy paternal love is my only refuge. Why then, O divine Jesus! art thou not the first object of my cares and inquiries?

The disorder of mind which thou beholdest in me on that subject is inconceivable. I know the vanity and false lustre of those goods which dazzle me; I know they can neither render me

me better nor more happy: that nothing will remain to me of their possession but a most bitter repentance, and a more certain assurance, that we can only find in thee alone the true repose.

Immortal thanks be given to thee, O my God! for having disposed things in such a manner, that I cannot be satisfied but in possessing solid and eternal goods. Turn away my eyes from vanity; deliver me from every thing that deprives me of the true goods; fortify me against the false opinions of men; and grant that the delusion and enchantment of trifles may never separate me from thee, O immutable truth! O sovereign felicity!

VI. But thou hast commanded me, O Lord! to love those very men whom thou forbiddest me to follow, that I might follow none but thee alone. Thou knowest my small light, and how incapable my weakness renders me of satisfying that obligation. Instruct me, O divine master! since it is for our instruction that thou art descended from heaven, and hast vouchsafed to be the companion of our pilgrimage. I am willing, O my God! to bear with every one, to serve every one, to be despised and mal-treated by every one, if thou hast so ordained it. I am ready to suffer all men to rise up against me, if thou permittest it. Only dilate my heart, that I may love them all out of that pure charity which I ought to have for thee; teach me to prefer it to every other love, and not even to suffer any other in my heart. Conduct me, O heavenly guide! in all my ways, that I may not go astray amongst the vicissitudes and inconstancy of human things.

Grant that I may rather chuse the disgrace than the favour of men, lest my heart should abandon thee to follow them. Dispel the clouds which hide thy light from me, that I may not be deceived by appearances, but esteem every thing according to its worth. Thou wouldst have me *not to fear those that kill the body, and cannot kill the soul; but rather fear thee who art able to ruin both body and soul in hell, Mat. x. 28.* But, that I may be able to accomplish thy word, establish in me the love of the true life, and the contempt of this. Grant that I may place all my glory in loving, pleasing, and serving thee. Reign thou in my heart, that *perfect charity may cast out from thence the fear of creatures, 1 Jo. iv. 18.*

VII. Teach

VII. Teach me, O Lord! how much I ought to esteem thy doctrine and imitation: for, alas! I lose very little, in losing credit, honour, and reputation among men, if I am so happy as to be agreeable to thee. All that men can give me is but exterior and superficial, and reaches not to the bottom of my soul; thou alone comfortest it interiorly, and fillest it with an ineffable sweetness. When shall I find myself enriched, sanctified, and filled in this exile with the consolations of the heavenly country? Look favourably on me, O my God! and I shall be rich in the privation of all creatures, and content under the disgrace of all men.

Give me those virtues whereby I may please thee, that I may not be to any one a just occasion of scandal and sin. Give me an extension of heart which may make me love and serve every one for the love of thee. Draw all my hope and desires to thee, since they are due only to thee, and are ill-employed for every thing else; but for thee. Restrain my tongue and fortify my heart, that I may suffer in silence every affliction that shall befall me. Let me regard the grandees of the world only as worms of the earth during their life, and as the food of worms after their death, that thou mayest be the only great and powerful in my soul.

Undeceive me as to all false appearances, that I may follow only the pure truth, that thou mayest be my sole recompence, that I may prefer thee always, as I ought, to all the wise, to all friends, to all relations, and to all the saints living on earth; and that nothing may hinder me from accomplishing what thou inspirest me with, or make me abandon thy doctrine. Support me, O Lord! thou who knowest my weakness, amongst the contradictions I shall meet with in thy service, lest I should yield thereto. Defend me, guide me, instruct me, and enliven me, O my fortitude, my way, my truth, and my life!

VIII. How easy is it for thee, O eternal beauty! to draw upon thyself the eyes of my soul. I plainly know that I live only because thou protectest me against my enemies; and that, if I am not yet lost, it is because thou takest care of me, and governest me. But if I find this support in thee, even when I forget thee, what shall I find in thee, when every thing in me is employed about thee? Rectify, O Lord! my intentions and designs, that I may resolve to please only thee alone: for to whom ought I to consecrate my interior, but to thee?

thee? And who can satisfy me out of thee, O my God and my all? If thou who art the divine fire, warmest not my soul, how can it love thee? Become so present to it, O my God, that in sleeping, eating, or speaking, at all times, in every place, in action, and rest, I may behold thee, that I may live before thee with that fear and respect which is due to thy presence, and that I may always adhere to what is most agreeable to thee.

Moses would not leave the place where he was, till thou hadst promised him to go before thy people; because he did not think himself safe without thee; and by conversing with thee the space of forty days, he knew his own weakness and thy power. And as for me, O Lord! how shall I walk without thee amidst the dangers which surround me? If I am here after in heaven to be lost in thee, O my God! and to enjoy therein eternal delights, why dost thou not join to eternity the short time that remains of my banishment, that I may begin at present to live to thee and in thee? Thou camest upon earth, and livedst amongst men, only that they might have with them their master, model, and happiness. I conjure thee therefore, O Lord! by that same love with which thou drawest us to thee, that in living among men, I may have thee always present, and that thou mayest be every where my master, my guide, and my light.

O most pure mother of God! you who found on earth, in the conversation of Jesus, riches infinitely more precious than all those of the powerful of the world, and were more agreeable to him than all creatures; introduce me into his presence, make me enjoy his conversation, and may all other enjoyments become insipid to me. And ye blessed spirits! who in the continual vision of that divine Saviour fills with all sort of blessings, ye know that I run to my ruin, when I follow him not; obtain me the grace of being in this life charmed with his beauty, and inflamed with his love; till I possess him with you in heaven. *Amen.*

XV. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

His fasting and life in the desert.

WHEN the time was come that Christ was to manifest himself to the world by his doctrine and miracles, the Holy Ghost brought *St. John Baptist* out of the desert to preach penance to the *Jews*, and to declare to them the *Messias* who had been promised to them so many ages before. But as *St. John* had never seen him, lest he should be blamed for bearing testimony of him he was unacquainted with, he gave them a mark whereby they might know him themselves, by telling them, that he was the Christ, upon whom they should see the Holy Ghost descending as a dove. Thus whilst *John* preached penance, and baptised those in *Jordan* who came to him confessing their sins, the Saviour of the world was there with sinners, and demanded baptism. He had already assumed the flesh of sinners in his incarnation; he had taken the resemblance of them and the punishment due to them in his circumcision, and in the penitential works which he practised all his life: but to become also like penitent sinners, he would be baptised with them, and sanctify the waters whereby the children of *Adam* were to be purified. *John* knew him immediately, before the descent of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove; which shewed that this sign was not given him for himself, but to authorise before the people the testimony he bore of Christ.

It was easy for so holy a soul, burning with love for the divine spouse, to know him at the first sight. Could the light be hidden from eyes so pure and always open? could he, who, when shut up in his mother's womb, had felt the presence of his well beloved, fail to know him again when he beheld him with his own eyes? If lambs distinguish their dams in the midst of the flock tho' they be like others; why could not *St. John* distinguish amongst a thousand, him whose spirit and love were his only food? 'Tis the property of pure love to know God every where, and to perceive him under what form soever he hides himself. If any one doubts of this truth, let him love God, and then complain that he cannot know him.

II. St. *John* made a difficulty of baptising our Saviour; on the contrary he desired to receive baptism from that divine hand, which he knew to be the source of all heavenly gifts; and he did not think he discharged the duty of his ministry well, in baptising him amongst sinners, whom he was to declare as the son of God. But when Jesus had told, that *so it became them to fulfil all justice*, and to give to the world that example of penance; St. *John* obeyed, and baptised him, *Mat. iii. 15.* For the saints follow their own lights in what regards the service and glory of God, only when the divine will is unknown to them; but when they know it by any means whatsoever, they submit themselves thereto in spite of their own views; and think no further than how to execute it, without desiring to penetrate into the reasons of his conduct and the depth of his judgments. Thus St. *John* consented that our Saviour should declare himself a child of *Adam*, by receiving baptism; and contented himself, for accomplishing the orders of heaven, to add that he whom he baptised was the son of God, leaving to the divine wisdom the means of confirming that truth, and of convincing the world thereof.

III. For this end it was, that immediately after baptism, he saw the Holy Ghost descend in the form of a dove, and rest upon Jesus Christ: then he declared to the people, that *Jesus was the Lamb of God*, that it was he *who takes away the sins of the world*: *Jo. i. 29.* and the eternal father confirmed that testimony by a voice coming from heaven, making these words be heard: *this is my well-beloved son, in whom I am well pleased*, *Mat. iii. 17.* giving us to understand thereby, that he no longer had the same aversion for sinners as he had had till then, since his only son was become man, and had taken the form of a sinner. St. *John Baptist* gave also the same testimony to the truth on other occasions. First, in the presence of Christ himself, who was lately come out of the desert. Secondly, when the Pharisees, surprised with so austere a life, asked whether he was the Messiah, he always constantly protested that he was not; that he was to be humbled, and the lamb of God exalted; (that he was only *the voice of one crying in the desert*,) and *the latchet of whose shoe he was not worthy to loose*. *Jo. i. 20. iii. 31. i. 23, 27.*

IV. Christ being willing to support the testimony of his precursor by his doctrine and works, prepared himself thereto by a retreat of forty days: and although he followed in all things the motion of the spirit of God, the scripture expressly shews

shews that this holy spirit led him into the desert, *Mat. iv. 1.* and teaches us thereby that his sacred humanity gathered new strength at the approach of the combat, and at the sight of the great things he was going to undertake. But there is nothing said of his abode in the desert, but that he fasted, and was tempted therein. St. *Luke* affirms only that *in those days he eat nothing*, *iv. 2.* St. *Mark, i. 13.* says, that *he was among beasts, and angels ministered to him*; and they leave to our own reflections what he had to suffer from the rain, snow, cold, and dirt in so severe a season; that is, in the month of *January* and *February*; having no house to retire into, being exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather, lying upon the ground, walking amongst stones and thorns, in fine overwhelming his innocent body with a thousand punishments which he had not deserved, without permitting the creatures to bring the least comfort to their creator.

Thus was our Saviour's fast, accompanied with many other sufferings, whereby his body was afflicted, whilst his mind was united to God by continual prayer. For he had not the same indulgence for himself that he had for *Moses* and *Elias*; who, being supported miraculously, felt neither hunger nor thirst during the retreat of forty days. But from the desire of satisfying for us, he preserved his strength only as far as was necessary for his praying and suffering: so that his hunger and thirst increasing daily, must have deprived him of life at last, had it not been supported by the divine power, which reserved him for greater sufferings.

Thus it was that he who wrought so many miracles for comforting his servants, wrought some for tormenting himself. An infinite number of examples make known what the force of hunger is, and to what extremities of fury and violence it reduces men. Christ was no less sensible than they, of so pressing a necessity, although it made him commit nothing of that kind; and we may say, that he has given his life for us as many times, as he would have lost it by so rigorous a fast, if the desire he had of enduring more for us, had not made him work a miracle for preserving it.

V. We must not here forget the circumstance St. *Mark* relates, that our Saviour was in the desert in the midst of beasts; that we may see he humbled himself so much for us even to live amongst serpents, and the most ferocious animals. Not that he took pleasure in having them near him, but

but because he beheld in them the brutal life of sinners, on which he never thought without being penetrated with sorrow. In seeing those beasts come to him when he called them, and at his feet forget their natural ferocity, he lamented over that of men, and particularly of those who, after having been so often drawn by the charms of his sweetness, and treated with so much goodness, were to persevere in their obstinacy, and perish eternally.

Beasts surrounded him, angels approached and served him; man alone, for whom he had descended from heaven, appeared not. Christ was concerned thereat, and prepared himself to seek him who came not of himself to find his deliverer, but on the contrary fled from him as an enemy.

We ought to envy those animals, who were become tame in the presence of their creator, and imitate the angels who acknowledged their sovereign in the midst of savage beasts, and applied themselves to serve him. They are not about Christ to hinder us from approaching to him; but rather to introduce us into his presence. He is accessible to all, and always ready to receive us, whether we come to him, as the beasts did, by renouncing the ferocity of our manners; or as the angels, to serve him with purity and love. For it was not to fly from men that he retired into the desert, but to come to seek them afterwards with so much the more goodness, as he had a more lively feeling of their absence.

VI. This conduct of our Saviour is a wonderful instruction to us: he teaches us two great truths thereby. First, of what importance the salvation of souls is; since he would not labour therein, till he had appeased the just wrath of the eternal father, by a fast of forty days, and by long prayers drawn down the heavenly benediction upon his doctrine and labours. Christ could have been indifferent to our salvation or perdition; being holy, great, eternal, and happy without us. But since he had taken our reconciliation upon himself, his infinite charity forgot nothing for the accomplishing that work: because all our happiness depends on the salvation of our souls, he has commanded nothing but what might conduct us thereto. He would have our salvation to be the rule of our obligations, and nothing is agreeable to him that can divert us from the same. And yet we are so miserable, as to live in the forgetfulness of so important a duty, or to regard it as one of the least affairs of our life: though Christ says to us

What doth it avail a man, if he gain the whole world, and incur the loss of his own soul? Mat. xvi. 26. Altho' he relates to us the unhappy end of a rich worldling, who thinking on nothing but how to fill his granaries, and forgetting his salvation, heard this voice from heaven; *Thou foolish man, this night thy soul is required of thee; and the things thou hast provided, whose shall they be?* And he adds, *Thus it is with him that heapeth up treasures to himself, and is not rich towards God.* Luke xii. 20, 21.

Ye are therefore foolish, in the judgment of the eternal wisdom, ye kings, grandees of the world, doctors, priests, religious, prelates, and pontiffs; ye are foolish, ye soldiers, captains, magistrates, private persons, poor, rich, merchants, and mechanics; ye are all foolish, if being too much taken up with the cares of this life, ye neglect your eternal salvation. What will it serve you to be full of earthly treasures, if ye are empty of the heavenly ones? Ye shall at last lose both the one and the other. Perishable goods shall soon leave you, and ye shall also be deprived for ever of eternal goods.

Have we not reason to tremble, seeing an apostle confirmed in grace, chastised his body severely, for fear of being a reprobate, after having saved others? St. *Augustin*, after his conversion, durst no longer teach human learning, for fear of taking that time from the care of his salvation. St. *John Baptist* spent twenty-five years in a frightful solitude; St. *Bartholomew* was bleed alive; St. *Lawrence* broiled on a grid-iron: the apostles and martyrs were torn to pieces, burnt, and tormented in a thousand manners; whole legions of saints retired into the deserts; others built monasteries as so many prisons, to be separate from the world; all, in fine, laboured with a continual application, for securing the salvation of their souls.

But if we consider still that we are in the midst of snares and dangers of perishing, with a vain confidence; that we are losing the time which ought to acquire us eternity; that we allow our senses all manner of licentiousness; that we think on nothing but diverting ourselves; that we employ in prayer and the care of our souls, only some lost moments, which the world has no occasion for; and that we even make a great account of them, though they be full of distractions, tepidity, and remissness: are not these new subjects of fear? And if we are insensible thereof, are we not much to be lamented for not being concerned at what made the greatest saints tremble?

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The remedy of so great an evil is to cast our eyes upon Jesus Christ, and earnestly entreat him to have mercy on our souls, which have cost his love so dear. For, as it is certain, according to the doctrine of St. *Augustin*, lib. 1. *ad Sempl. q. 2.* that he who redeemed us without us, will not save us without us : that no person will be saved, unless he is called of God ; that none of those that are called, will do the works of salvation, unless he be assisted with grace ; and that none will deserve to be assisted, unless he pray : it is certain also, that if the wicked are lost, because God permits it, they are never lost because he wills it ; that he calls us without our asking it, because the vocation depends on him alone ; that he is ready to succour us before we desire him, that none may be excused from praying ; and that it is always our own fault if we do not pray, and if we neglect our salvation. Let us learn by the application which our Saviour gave thereto, the care we ought to have in it ourselves.

VII. The second thing Christ teaches us, is the manner in which we ought to practise fasting and other exterior virtues, that they may be an efficacious remedy for the evils of our souls. For, as a holy man says, to fast and sin, is imitating the devil, who is always wicked and never eats. Our Lord's fast was accompanied with prayer and solitude. Far from the noise and commerce of men, he was wholly employed with God. The holy scripture also rejects that fasting which is joined to self-will, to vicious works, to a disorderly life, and to inclinations contrary to the law of God. And St. *Gregory* compares those who fast without mortifying their passions, to *Simon the Cyrenæan*, who carried the cross of Christ, but did not die upon it with him. Fasting alone does not root out vice from the soul, nor plant virtue therein. That fasting which is most agreeable to God, is to abstain from what is detrimental to the soul.

Not that one does ill in fasting, whilst in sin ; for though fasting in that state be of little or no merit towards salvation, it is much better to fast without merit, than not to fast with demerit. And though that fasting should serve only to facilitate the practice of it to us, for the time of grace, it would be always profitable to us. But I say this, that an action so profitable and so much esteemed by the saints, may not be done without the fruit which is always reaped from it, when mortification of heart, and the exercise of other virtues are joined thereto.

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There are also in fasting two extremities to be feared; the one, of seeking so many mitigations therein, that it is turned into delicacy; which would be, as St. *Augustin* observes, *Enor. in Ps. xliii.* making of abstinence itself an occasion of intemperance: the other, of weakening nature so, as to put ourselves out of a condition of discharging our duties, and applying ourselves to prayer. We must also carefully avoid a certain delusion of the devil, whereby we affect fasts of supererogation more than those which are commanded. For that enemy of our salvation, inspiring us with fervency towards those austerities of our own chusing, endeavours to render us incapable of that which the church imposes upon us, and to make us find more relish in our private devotions, than in what is according to God's order. But every virtue, wherein there is more self-will than obedience, ought to be suspected; and Christ, who sacrificed himself upon a cross out of obedience, loves obedience better than sacrifice.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ in his fasting and life in the desert.

WHAT thanks shall I give thee for all the blessings which thou hast bestowed upon me, and still bestowest upon me every moment of my life, O the glory of angels! O the faithful companion of poor sinners! O divine Jesus, my Lord and my God! May all creatures praise thee with me; and because thou art above all praise, may thy works, thy perfections, and thy greatness praise thee; since they are the measure of those blessings which thou heapest upon me, and since thou hast so little regard to my meanness. For what would become of me, if thou didst not take care of me, and if I were deprived of the favours I continually receive from thy goodness? Teach me to acknowledge them as much as I ought, and to love thee as much as I can: and though I am incapable of loving thee equally to thy deserts, let there at least be something in me but what loves thee.

Thou

Thou knowest, O Lord! that though thou shouldst center in me the love of all the just, who are in heaven and on earth, and that I should love thee with all their love, it would be a small matter in comparison to that which thou hast for me. Thou hast loved me from all eternity; before I was born, I was present to thy divine wisdom, and thy infinite mercy had already caused thee to take upon thyself my sins, my miseries, and my salvation. Thou knewest that thou hadst no need of me; but that eternal love wherewith thou lovedst me, obliges thee to have mercy on me, and to omit nothing that depended on thee, for hindering me from being condemned by thy justice.

II. I adore that infinite love; I adore that paternal heart wherein I was written; I adore that amiable care which thou hadst of my salvation. Ah, Lord! let not thy poor creature perish, neither let it be said that thou hast laboured unprofitably for it. 'Tis for my love that thou goest into the desert, remainest there amongst beasts, and receivest the service of angels therein. It is for me that thou fastest forty days, sufferest hunger and faintings, and art exposed to the sun, wind, and rain therein. It is for my salvation that thou sheddest for many tears before our eternal father, appeaseth his wrath, and satisfiest his justice. Thou beseechest him to open the ear of my heart, that I may hear, and relish thy doctrine; to enlighten me with the truths of thy faith, to pardon me my sins, and to receive me into his favour. I neither have nor hope for any good, O divine Jesus! but what I am indebted for to those tears, those prayers, to that penance, that fasting, and that love which thou hadst for me, before I was, before I knew thee, before I loved thee, and before I could pray to thee.

How admirable are thy cares, thy tenderness, and thy earnestness, O merciful father, for a child so ungrateful and unworthy of thy love! Thou art more sensible of my evils, and lovest me more tenderly, than if thou hadst borne me in thy bowels: but what do I say? hast thou not borne me in thy heart? hast thou not sought me, called me, and excited me by the care and attractives of that eternal love? that seeing myself prevented and encompassed with the blessings of thy sweetness, I might acknowledge that amorous and paternal heart which is the fountain thereof.

Burn therefore, O my heart! tho' cold thou art, with the love of that so amiable and so sweet a Saviour: be thou dilated, O strait and narrow heart, for he that desires thee, seeks thee, and has done so much for thee, cannot despise thee. I have not words, O divine Jesus! to express what I feel; but I cast myself into that eternal love wherewith thou art inflamed: there it is thy ineffable goodness has given me being, with all the blessings I possess and hope for; I return thither to offer myself to thee: burn me, O Lord! inflame me with that very fire, and refuse me not the fruits of so many tears which thou sheddest, and of so many labours which thou endurest for me. I love thee with my whole heart, O my Jesus! If thou seest that my love is neither so pure nor so extensive as I say, methinks I would that it were so; and if thou also findest that I have not that desire, I sincerely wish to have it; and though I should be deceived as to my own sentiments, I cannot be deceived in thine: for I am sure, that how miserable soever I am, thou art ready to receive me.

III. Thou knowest, O Lord! what he is for whom thou labourest; thou seest in me what afflicts thee, but thou findest in thyself what is proper for me. Perform in the soul of thy servant what thou knowest, what thou canst, and what thou wilt. Grant, O divine light! that I may see myself in thee; grant that I may know, hate, and fly myself; and that I seek thee, O my God! who canst alone deliver me from all my evils, and heal all my wounds. Is it possible that thou shouldst undertake, with so many cares and sufferings, the affair of my salvation; and that I should rather chuse to ruin myself than to treat with thee about it? Thou hast laboured therein all thy life, from the moment of thy conception to that of thy death; and as for me, unhappy and blind that I am, I will not so much as look upon the dangers which surround me on every side; and have as little thought on thee and myself, as if my eternal salvation was not concerned therein. The time thou hast given me for serving thee and meriting thy kingdom is slipping from me every moment, and I employ it in offending thee; I even seek for amusements, to keep off the thoughts of those blessings I am losing.

Childhood, youth, and all the rest of my life slips away in such a manner, that I cannot say with truth, that I have spent one single day of it without fault, and in a perfect application to my duty. My thoughts are distracted, my desires unruly, my memory full of vain fancies, my understanding wholly
taken

taken up with earthly things, and my will plunged in mean and shameful affections; my very prayers, fastings, and other actions whereby I might please thee, are so full of tepidity, self-love, faults, and imperfections, that thou mayest justly punish me for them.

In the ordinary occupations of life, I am sickle, fretful, uneasy, and always agitated with some passion of sadness or joy, of fear or hope. Thus this miserable heart being perpetually rent by contrary motions, and dissipated by a thousand different objects, when I resolve to treat with thee, I find myself so estranged from thee, that I can scarcely believe I am the work of thy hands. I am as mere a novice in spiritual things, as obdurate against the impressions of thy spirit, as little acquainted with the practice of pure virtues, and as insensible of every thing that can unite me to thee, as if I had not been born to love and possess thee eternally. I beg heaven of thee, as if it were my due; I live with as much assurance as if I had deserved it, and I am so well satisfied with myself in the little good, or even in the sole appearance of the good I do with tepidity and remissness, as if I thought I could not lose the kingdom of heaven. Hence it is that what ought to be my chief occupation, is the least of my care. Thou seest, O Lord! to what danger this vain confidence exposes me, and I will not see it; and the love thou bearest me causes me all the pain which I ought to have myself.

IV. O fountain of mercy! O divine shepherd! O son of the living God! who art descended from heaven to find the lost sheep, and comest to seek them thyself, because thou knowest they can lose themselves without thee, but cannot return into the fold, unless thou bringest them back to it. I am lost as a strayed sheep; I have forsaken thy sweet and rich pastures, to run after withered and poisoned grass. I have separated myself from thy flock, by shunning obedience; and I have followed the wolves which devour me. I have left the way in which thou ledst me, and have thrown myself into by-paths which lead only to precipices. I acknowledge my wanderings. O charitable shepherd! seek thy sheep, call back thy servant, and allow me to be with thee, as thou allowest the beasts, amongst which thou livedst in the desert; I am more ferocious and untractable than they; tame me by thy infinite sweetness, and subject me for ever to the obedience I owe thee.

Imprint in my heart an earnest desire of my salvation, since it is not thy will I should perish. Grant I may always see, by a ray of thy light, the importance of saving my soul, since it is the first thing thou commandest me to seek for. May at least join my labours to thine, that thou mayest assist by thy power the weakness thou seest in me.

Thou hast said, O Lord! that *no one can come unto thee, unless the father draws him*, John vi. 44. Thou knowest the saints have no need of being drawn, but the sinners, that they may become saints: that the good and gentle need not be gained by compulsion, but the obstinate and ferocious. Since thou permittest beasts to approach to thee, and even drawest them by thy caresses, wilt thou not also allow me to remain at thy feet? They only love thee when they see thee, and will resume their former ferocity when they are no longer with thee, but if thou shalt graciously draw to me, O my God! thou wilt change me entirely; thou wilt make of a wolf a lamb, of a lion a sheep, and of a rebellious slave an obedient servant, who will never forsake thee more.

V. By a prophet, thou hast promised those souls that are at a distance from thee, that *thou wilt lead them into the wilderness, and wilt speak to their hearts*, Osea ii. 14. Thou knowest, O Lord! what that wilderness is where one hears thee speak, far from the noise and hurry of the world; I know it not fully; but methinks, if I were in any place, where I should hear nothing but thy voice, and where thou shouldst speak in the bottom of my heart, I should be full of thee, and thou wouldst be content with me. O solitude, where all blessings are to be found, shall I never find thee? Ah, Lord! lead me into that place, and there speak to my heart; speak, Lord, and thy servant shall hear. Let all other voices be silent for me: for thy voice is thy voice, and charming are thy words. In a moment thou wilt purify me; thou wilt inflame me with thy love, and it turn into bitterness every thing that can separate me from thee. Let all creatures be mute then, speak thou alone to me, O my Master! my Lord! my consolation! and my life!

O mother of God! O most pure sheep! from whence camest thou the lamb without spot, you never went astray, you always followed the Lord in spirit, and you alone received more blessings from him than all creatures together; impart some share thereof to this miserable sinner, obtain me the grace of being
a true

a true servant of God, and that no creature may divide my heart with him. And ye blessed spirits, conduct me into those eternal solitudes, where one is filled with delights, and removed for ever from the dangerous tumults of this life; and since I was created to remain with you in that happy abode, prevail that I may desire, with an insatiable ardor, the happiness which you enjoy; that I may seek it without intermission, and that I may so pass through temporal evils, as to possess with you eternal blessings. *Amen.*

XVI. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

His temptation in the desert.

CHRIſT having ſpent forty days without eating, his ſacred humanity was become ſo weak, that the devil thought it was a very proper occaſion for tempting him without diſcovering himſelf. For his common artifice is to obſerve every favourable moment for ſeducing men, either by ſome appearance of good, or by a pretence of neceſſity, or by the view of avoiding ſome greater evil, if there be any manifeſt ſin in what he ſuggeſts. But he neither ſtands in need of wile nor force in regard of thoſe whom vice has ſubjected to him; they make no reſiſtance, but grant him whatever he deſires, and are leſs afraid of committing ſin than of being healed therefrom. When God calls them to penance and when they reſolve to follow his inſpiration, then it is that they begin to feel the weight of ſin, the importunity of temptation and the force of the enemy, who quits not without great difficulty a place wherein he has ruled ſo long. Thus, properly ſpeaking, none are tempted but thoſe that reſiſt; and it is alſo particularly for their inſtruction that our Saviour vouchſafed to be tempted with ſo much artifice, after a retreat of forty days, ſpent in the contemplation of heavenly things and in an intimate union with God his father.

II. It is very aſtoniſhing that our Lord ſhould ſuffer ſo odious a creature to approach him, and even to preſume to tempt him; but becauſe he had offered himſelf for our ſalvation

tion to all the evils that could be endured without sin, he would not have temptation, which is the severest and most dangerous trial of his servants, to be exempted from him, nor give us an occasion of complaining that having become the companion of all our labours, he had abandoned us in this. It was for that reason he not only concealed his divinity, but also the glory of his blessed soul from that angel of darkness, who would never have attacked him, had he known him; because he knew the blessed are no longer capable of being seduced. He was very sensible that he had an unlimited power to tempt Christ exteriorly, and that that power was not given him without restriction in regard of other men, even the most holy; he observed also in the son of God so great a purity of heart, that he knew not on what side to attack him; but he was so blinded by his pride, that he could not comprehend that a God made man should humble himself so far as to suffer himself to be tempted; and he imagined that what appeared extraordinary in Christ were acquired or infused graces, and not natural perfections. However he suspected something divine in him, and that was what gave him so great an inclination of knowing the truth thereof.

He presented himself to him therefore under the figure of an inhabitant of those deserts; he made use of the hunger and faintness in which he beheld him, in order to accost him and to compassionate his suffering; he, undoubtedly, called to his remembrance the favour he had lately received on the banks of *Jordan*, when God by a heavenly voice had called him his well-beloved son; he represented to him that he who had made water issue from the rock to quench the thirst of his people, would easily change, if he were desired, the stones into bread to assuage the hunger of his son; in fine, the tempter omitted nothing for concealing what he was, for counterfeiting the charitable man, and for giving authority thereby to his counsels.

III. The H. fathers explain in different manners the temptations of our Saviour in the desert.

Some compare them to those of our first parents in the terrestrial paradise, and say that our Saviour was first tempted with gluttony, in order to expiate that of *Adam*, which had brought so many miseries upon us; then with vain-glory, for repairing the desire which *Eve* had conceived of becoming like

like God; and lastly with idolatry and avarice, for remedying those two great evils which had corrupted the whole world.

Others affirm, that the manner in which Christ was tempted, shews the deplorable state of those who suffer themselves to be overcome by the devil; for in the first temptation is discovered the blindness of carnal men, given up to good cheer, and those gross pleasures, which cannot satisfy a soul created for heavenly blessings, no more than stones can be the food of our bodies.

We see by the second temptation that pride elevates the proud to the height of worldly grandeur, only to precipitate them afterwards into an abyss of confusion: and the third teaches us, that the disorderly love of riches is according to the expression of the apostle, *Ephes. v. 5.* true idolatry; since the covetous man considers them as the divinity which he adores.

Some add, that the words which our Saviour made use of for resisting the devil, are most powerful arms against all sorts of temptations, and most certain means for bringing back strayed souls into the way of salvation. But because this matter is of great extent, we will content ourselves with observing here with several spiritual writers, that the devil, always attentive to do us hurt, carefully observes our inclinations, that he may deceive us by the appearance of virtue, if they are good; and that he may openly second them, if they are bad, he hides his designs and snares; and when he finds all the avenues shut on that side, he intrudes himself among the gifts of God, that he may enter into the soul without being perceived; he examines whether it desires these gifts with uneasiness, whether it relishes them with eagerness, whether it receives them with ingratitude, and as its own right, and whether it commits any imperfection therein, whereby he might spread his venom. Thus it is that finding no entrance into the soul of Christ, because of the admirable purity of his virtues, he made use of those very virtues to tempt him.

IV. It is the property of perfect virtue, especially of charity and the pure love of God, to inspire us with an intire confidence in him, to suffer nothing in us that cannot possess or divide the heart, and to make us resign all the events of life to the divine providence. Such was the interior disposition of St. Paul the hermit, whom God miraculously fed in the desert for the space of ninety years. Such was that of many

many other saints of whom he took care; for God is faithful, and lets not those want any thing who entirely put their trust in him.

But this entire resignation is a degree of such sublime virtue, by its resemblance to the life which the blessed lead in heaven, that though we ought all to desire it, yet it is certain that it is given only to a small number of chosen souls, whom God calls thereto by a particular attractive grace. For when he has once introduced the soul into that happy region of peace, he takes its conduct upon himself, removes all error and delusion from it, and deprives it of all uneasiness about temporal things; so that being wholly employed with God alone, it does not so much as think whether he takes care of it, or whether he forgets it. But those who enter of themselves into that state of perfection, and erect so great an edifice upon weak foundations, are exposed to dangerous falls; because they have not received the gift of God's grace, and abandoning the necessary occupations of their state, instead of finding peace, they fall into trouble and the snares of the devil.

Wherefore that spirit of darkness seeing that Christ lived so long without any food, that he received no help from any person, that no angel came to bring him bread as there did to *Elias*, that he was not raised into glory as *Moses* was during his fast upon mount *Sanai*, he judged he was a great saint, and that he must not attack him as he did ordinary men. He bethought himself therefore at first whether he might not engage Christ to carry his confidence in God too far, and thereby make him fall into presumption, by endeavouring to persuade him that after so long a fast, he well deserved to be fed by a miracle. This was a very cunning and dangerous temptation in that conjuncture: for it seems it would be better to expect with confidence that God should work a miracle for supplying so pressing a necessity, than to distract one's self about going to seek for human assistance: and yet it is certain that we must have recourse, in acknowledgment of our own unworthiness, to lawful and ordinary means; and that it is overturning the order of charity, to seek the nourishment of the body, from the merit of our confidence in God.

The devil by saying to Christ, *Mat. iv. 3. command that these stones be made bread*, intended to see whether he would command in the manner that God did, who said, *and they were made*, who commanded, *and they were created*, *Pf. cxlviii. 5.* or whether, being

but a mere man, he would obtain a miracle by way of prayer; or whether in fine he would shew, in so great an extremity, that perfect confidence which proceeds from the pure love of God. But our Saviour rendered that artifice unprofitable, and broke all the devil's measures by this single answer: *man lives not by bread only, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, Mat. iv. 4.*

This was what *Moses* said to the *Israelites*, for setting before their eyes, that their chief care ought to be to fear God and observe his law. He represented to them that for forty years they had been feed with heavenly bread in the midst of the desert, where they could find no food; and that one never wants what is necessary whilst he is faithful to God, who can, when he pleases, preserve men's lives, without the help of ordinary aliment. Christ answered the devil in the same sense, that he had no need of that miracle, since God had already supported him so long without bread. From whence we must conclude, that it is unworthy of a heart capable of possessing God and his eternal blessing, to depend more on corporal things than on the divine providence, who governs and nourishes all creatures.

V. The two other temptations tended also to overthrow the foundations of perfect charity: for the devil believing our Saviour was but a mere man, carried him up to the pinnacle of the temple, pretended that he was edified with so great a confidence in God, exhorted him to persevere therein, telling him that the servants and children of God had nothing to fear, and that no evil could befall him; since it is written: *he has given his angels charge of thee; that they keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands they shall bear thee; lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone, Ps. xc. 11, 12.* and that therefore he might cast himself from the top of the temple, and he should be supported in his fall, as he had been in coming up. It is not credible that the devil had assumed any strange body, or that he transported Christ by touching him; but carried him up by an invifible virtue, and by a natural power which spirits have over bodies. Now the particular design of that temptation was to inspire our Saviour with the esteem of himself and with a confidence in his own virtue, in an occasion wholly rash, from whence no glory could accrue to God, and in which on the contrary his power was tempted.

The devil had learned by his own chastisement, that nothing displeases God more than self-esteem; he was provoked to find

so much resistance, and could scarce dissemble any longer: as it always happens to him, when he is repulsed courageously, and his artifices are discovered. But though he had suppressed, for fear of being known, the following words of the same Psalm, *upon the asp and the basilisk thou shalt walk: and thou shalt tread upon the lion, and the dragon*; yet he was not the better concealed thereby: for Christ confounded him by saying; *thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*; and shewed us at the same time, how far that perfect confidence inspired by pure love ought to extend: for when pure love is once well established in the heart, man resigns himself entirely to the conduct of the divine spirit; but with so much diffidence and contempt of himself, that all the glory thereof redounds to God. He obeys humbly, without presumption or rashness, and accommodates himself to all the vicissitudes which providence ordains, without dissipation, or losing interior attention which keeps him united to God. The devil endeavours always to trouble that order, by withdrawing the soul from its union with God, to possess it with the esteem of itself.

VI. Then full of rage and pride, he took off the mask, and all his dissimulation was changed into impudence. God so permitted it, to confound that proud spirit, and to teach us, that having in vain consumed all his wiles against a man constant and faithful in temptation, he no longer observes any measures but assaults him openly at last. Which shews how much more prudent an humble servant of God is than his enemy; who, by discovering himself, loses his advantage, and becomes most easy to be overcome.

He therefore transported Christ unto a very high mountain, and shewed him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory, probably by a view of imagination, and said to him: *all these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me*. I am the master of them; no person is more worthy of them than you, and it is unreasonable that, being capable of governing the whole world, you should remain in obscurity. The devil thereby designed to inspire Christ with some motion of pride. Weak effort of an enemy discovered, who despairing of victory, makes use of any thing without order that comes in his way! But that very temptation often assaults the servants of God in a more hidden manner, when seeing the corruption of the world, they think themselves capable of remedying it, set themselves about the same without any vocation, and thus lose, without profiting others, the interior peace they possessed.

True virtue never allows good people to think themselves proper for those employments to which God does not call them; and even when he calls them thereto, they judge themselves capable thereof, only so far as they are governed, instructed, and supported by the spirit of God.

Christ suffered no longer the devil's impudence: he commanded him to retire, saying to him: *Begone Satan, for it is written, the Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve.* Afterwards the angels approached to serve him, and to congratulate with him upon his victory. The devil knew not even then that Christ was truly the son of God; because that manner of overcoming temptation was common, and such as virtuous persons daily practise.

VII. But the words our Saviour made use of for driving away the devil, clearly shew how efficacious a firm and resolute will is for destroying all the attempts of an enemy, who cannot overcome us, unless he be in league with our own will. Hence it is that he employs so many artifices for gaining it: for he begins by desiring to be heard; then he fixes us upon the thoughts he suggests, that we may take pleasure therein: after that we have more difficulty to forsake the occasion which produces them; the strength of the soul is weakened by degrees; the consideration and respect of God being present is taken away; the will totally consents at last; and the devil leaves it not till the action be accomplished. The experience of sin makes us more earnestly desire the act thereof; repeated acts form a habit of it, which is that fatal chain so difficult to be broken, which the devil makes use of for dragging us into hell. But when he finds a will resolved to fight against him, deaf to his first suggestions, and that immediately repels him with courage, that cowardly enemy is soon repulsed, and never gains any advantage.

Since a heart determined to serve God, is so strong against temptation, it follows that if it increases, it is commonly our own fault: for God, who always supports those by his grace who beg it of him with humility, knows that the temptation is never above our strength, but when the will is weakened, and we neglect to resist it in the beginning.

St. Luke, iv. 13. adds, that *the devil departed from Jesus for a time*; to make us understand, that afterwards by Judas and the Jews, who were the ministers of his fury, he assaulted him whom he durst not attack by himself; because he could find

no entrance into a soul so pure, and entirely free from the revolt of the flesh; which is the most common means he employs for making us fall. Thus temptation, in regard of our Saviour, was neither dangerous as to its consequences, nor difficult for him to resist; but what he wanted from that quarter, was abundantly supplied by the extreme humiliation of venturing himself with the most contemptible of his creatures. Thus has he left to his servants the consolation of having him as a companion even in their temptations; and by an admirable invention of his love, he was pleased to teach us in himself the manner of combating our enemies, and to merit for us the strength of overcoming them.

VIII. God seems to have three views in permitting men to be tempted; one to try their virtue, another to exercise it, and the third to weaken our enemy.

For First, God often permits his servants to be tempted; that their virtue, which remained hidden in the midst of peace, might appear in the combat; and that each of them might discover their strength or weakness. A peaceable state commonly conceals the want as well as perfection of virtue, and temptation discovers both. Thus it was that *Abraham's* obedience shone resplendently on the command he received to sacrifice his own son; *Job's* constancy on the loss of all he possessed; *Tobias's* patience on his blindness, and *St. Peter's* cowardice on the occasion of declaring himself Christ's disciple. Thus also it was that our Saviour's humility appeared in affronts, his meekness in contradictions, his fortitude in labours, his love in torments, and all the other virtues in the occasions of practising them; not for his own necessities, but for the example and sanctification of men.

Secondly, Temptation exercises virtue in us, in order to augment it, and in Jesus Christ in order to teach us the purity and perfection thereof: for as it could not increase in him, he practised it only for us. So whenever the devil sees us intent in forming ourselves according to that model, he loses courage; because he discovers in that imitation, the arms that overcame him. But if he perceives we are negligent, if he finds us cold in the exercise of virtue, he lays hold of our weakness, and attacks us with advantage.

Thirdly, Our Saviour was pleased to be tempted in order to weaken our enemy, not by depriving him of the power of tempting us, but by lessening of the right he had acquired
over

over us, to attack us with all his strength. He was stript of that right, not by *violence*, according to St. *Leo's* observation, *Serm. i. de Quadr.* but by *justice*: for by procuring the son of God, who was innocent, the punishment of the cross, he deserved, by so great a crime, to lose his right over the guilty, who being delivered thereby from *his* tyranny, and become again the lawful heirs of the eternal kingdom, from which he was excluded, now defend their inheritance against that *usurper*. So that all the wiles and combats that men suffered before, as a just punishment of their sin, are at present a seed of glory to them.

This made St. *Eusebius* bishop of *Ephesus* say, that the condition of the devil is very miserable, since all his hatred becomes to the servants of God, a sure means of obtaining what he would deprive them of, and since the violence he exercises against them, enriches the church with merits, perfects souls in virtue, crowns the labours of the just, and fills heaven with martyrs and confessors. But it must also be owned, that those are still more miserable than he, who suffer themselves to be overcome by a disarmed enemy, who voluntarily resume the yoke from which they were delivered, who furnish him against themselves with those arms which Christ had taken from him, who give him occasion to triumph over their fall, and lose at last those eternal blessings which our Saviour had purchased for them with his blood.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ's temptation in the desert.

O Almighty God! whose infinite power chiefly appears in pardoning sinners, whom thou hast created after thy own image, *have mercy on me, according to thy great mercy.* Grant our earthly hearts may love thee above all things, and that we may obtain those great recompences thou hast promised us: for since they surpass all our desires, they deserve our whole heart. Is it the greatest effort of thy power to produce such nothings as we are, or to punish such weak creatures? Nothing in nature opposes thy will; thou canst reduce us to the number of those things, which are not, and justly destroy those who have so unjustly offended thee, without meeting with any resistance. But to soften the hardness of my ungrate-
ful

ful heart, to stop the just complaints which thy justice makes against me, and to pardon with mercy him who is unworthy thereof, requires an infinite power; and because thine is such, thou canst do in me what thou pleasest, without prejudicing thy justice, or destroying thy creature.

O God of Majesty, before whom the angels tremble with respect; who is so great, so powerful, so just, and so merciful as thou art? Be thou for ever blessed for the faith thou hast given me, whereby I acknowledge thee for my God; for the hope with which thou inspirest me, whereby thou obligeest me to expect eternal blessings from thee; and for the charity which thou art willing to kindle in my heart, whereby thou wilt have me to love thee with all my strength.

II. But it depends on thee, O Lord! who canst do whatever thou pleasest, to make my soul sensible of the infinite greatness which is in thee. Thou canst, if thou wilt, enlighten my blindness, fortify my weakness, replenish me with thy grace, subject me entirely to thee, and elevate my meanness even to the participation of thy essence. Speak then, Omnipotent and most merciful Jesus! speak to this leper, to this wretch, to this sinner. Make thyself be heard by my heart, O eternal father! say only *I will*, and I shall be healed; I shall be strong; I shall love thee; and I shall imitate thee perfectly; for thou canst do whatever thou pleasest.

The great things thou hast done for me, only because thou wouldst do so, teach me that I ought to hope for every thing that I have need of from thy love. Thou wast pleased to become man for me; and thou wast so because thou wouldst be so. Thou wouldst take the form of a slave and of a sinner, and resemble me in all things except sin. Thou wouldst take my debts upon thee, and satisfy them by thy love. Thou wouldst instruct my ignorance by thy heavenly doctrine. Thou hast overcome my enemies. Thou hast taught me the manner of fighting against them. Thou hast abased the majesty of thy divine person so far as to suffer thyself to be tempted by a cursed creature, whom thou hast rejected for ever, and who will always hate thee. Thou didst permit his infernal malice to attack thy sovereign purity. Thou did allow that spirit of darkness to transport thee whither he would, and to go so far as even to ask thee to adore him. It is true he knew thee not; but thou, O my God! who sufferedst him to do it, thou perfectly knewest thy own greatness, and his baseness.

It

It was an extreme humiliation for thee to see thyself, in the time of thy passion, trampled on by the executioners; and yet thou lovedst them, how wicked soever they were; and all their cruelty hindered thee not from praying and dying for them. They exercised by their crimes the virtue which laboured in sanctifying them. They shed the blood wherewith they were washed. Many of them even acquired eternal glory by the ignominies which they made thee suffer; and converted by their own sins, they gave their life for thee, after having put thee to death.

But the devil being always an enemy to thy love and to thy children, always ineffable in his hatred, obstinate in his malice, insensible of thy goodness, and unworthy of thy presence; why didst thou permit him to have the boldness of approaching to thee, of speaking to thee, and of tempting thee, as he tempts sinners? Why didst thou vouchsafe to dispute with so infamous a creature? Why didst thou permit the infernal spirit, after being overcome, still to discharge his rage against thee, by the means of his ministers, so far as to fasten thee to the cross; and to be able to boast of having thwarted thy designs, and of having taken away thy life? All I know on that point, O my God! is, that thou wouldst have so, and hast done so: and thou wouldst have it so, and hast done so out of the love thou hast for me. But the reasons of that love are not to be found in me, they are all in thee, O Lord! thy wisdom and mercy have invented that admirable order and harmony, by which God is glorified and man saved.

III. What hinders then at present, O my God! thy goodness from willing, and thy power from doing what I desire thee? Communicate to me, thy light, thy love, thy purity, thy sweetness, and thy strength; and put this pure creature in such a state as thou wouldst have it in. If in thy goodness thou findest reasons for willing and doing things which seem so inconsistent with what thou art, wilt thou find none for the thing in the world the most conformable to thy divine greatness, and to the efficacy of an abundant redemption, that is, for manifesting the glory of thy power and mercy, by granting me with plenitude what my heart desires with so much fervour? It is true I am unworthy thereof, and thou seeest nothing in me but reasons for refusing me: but is not thy goodness greater than my unworthiness; and are not the motives which thou findest in thyself for succouring me, infinitely stronger than those which thou findest in me for abandoning me? Have mercy on me therefore, O Lord! for thy own sake;

Make; assist me, heal me, restore me, and make me such as thou desirest.

But since I know, O my Saviour! both by thy word, and my own experience, that it is from thee alone I can and ought to expect those great blessings which I do not deserve: suffer me to represent to thee my wants and miseries with confidence and humility.

IV. Thou seest, O Lord! that since the devil presumed to tempt thy incomparable holiness, over which he had no power, and which on the contrary he had so many reasons to fear; since he assaulted an infinite innocence, an invincible force, and a consummate virtue; and since he opposed thy eternal designs, in order to frustrate them; what will he not undertake against a weak man as I am, born in miseries, plunged in mire, and full of corruption?

Thou knowest, O Lord! that this roaring lion never sleeps, that he seeks to devour me, that he omits nothing for hurting me, that he insinuates himself every where, that he continually seduces me to evil, that he corrupts the good I do, and that he is always intent on setting snares to entrap me. I am not even safe from him whilst I sleep, nor when I awake; he tempts me at all times, on all occasions; he sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light; he hides himself under the appearances of virtue, under my own inclinations, and often even under a shew of thy favours. He assaults me every where, and in every manner, within and without, in good and bad things, in labour and rest, in prayer and action: and enters so secretly into my thoughts, desires, and affections, that I perceive him not.

When he cannot make me sin, he disturbs me by his temptations, fatigues me by his importunities, and staggers me by dangerous imaginations wherewith he fills my mind: he reproaches his wrath and envy against me, in order to deprive me of those goods he has lost: he calls to his assistance all theuries of hell, the vanity of the world, the propensity of corrupt nature, bad examples, the accidents of life, and the very sins which thou hast forgiven me; and thus he makes me distrust thy mercy.

I have always had that enemy at my side, ever since I was born; even when I knew him not, he was near me, and the greatest wounds he gave me, were often those I had not the least feeling of.

O divine

O divine Jesus, my fortitude and hope! what shall a weak, miserable, ignorant creature do, against so powerful and cunning an enemy? What am I to maintain so unequal and so dangerous a combat? To whom shall I have recourse in so cruel and continual a war?

I know that thou never permittest my enemy to tempt me above my strength; that I can always overcome him with thy grace; that I reap a considerable profit from that victory, and this is what renders me inexcusable. I confess it before thy mercy, not desiring to justify myself, but acknowledging my misery, and imploring thy help. O God of goodness! by whose patience I live, who bearest with me and expectest me, thou seest all the advantages which that enemy obtains over me, I give ear to him, I open him the door of my heart, and receive him therein, whilst this heart is shut against thee. My readiness to obey him renders him more bold to do me harm; and when I resolve to have recourse to thee, he assaults me still with greater fury; because I have let him enter, and have abandoned myself to him.

V. I feel myself weaker every day, since my will has refused thy help; and acknowledge that my weakness proceeds from my own fault: for that accursed spirit would have no power over me, if my remissness and negligence had not given it him. 'Tis with justice therefore that he accuses me before thee, O ever equitable judge! because he knows he can neither overcome me, nor hurt me, unless I am willing. But, alas! I have consented miserable creature that I am, and thereby have fallen under his power. He has drawn me into an infinite number of miseries; he still treats me as his slave; and in all that I can only blame myself alone.

Shall I remain without a remedy before thee, O my God! who art an ocean of mercy? Why art thou my redeemer, if it be not to set me at liberty? Why art thou my sovereign good, but to deliver me from all evil? O ineffable goodness! sanctify me. O eternal sweetness! pardon me. O infinite power! deliver me from my enemy and from myself. Thou knowest, O Lord! that he will never cease from persecuting me, till he sees me undone to all intents and purposes. Defend me from that roaring lion; let him remain without his prey; and let me be secured from his fury under the shadow of thy wings. Remember that thou foughtest against him only that I might overcome him by thy power. Fight then still for me, O Lord, and triumph in me over my enemy.

'Tis true thou hast commanded me to obey none but thee, and to adore none but thee alone: and yet I have subjected myself willingly to him. I have abandoned my senses and appetites to him, which he has formed to rebel against me and thee, and I have had more complaisance and affection for him than for thee.

Thou hast forbidden me to be rash, and to tempt thee; and yet I have the rashness to appear in thy fight cloathed with the livery of thy enemies, and with the marks of my slavery. I have been foolish enough to hope, that I should be saved by walking in the way of perdition. I have often been willing to join sensual pleasures, and the devil's will with thy service; and because that union was impossible, I have allowed myself to run into a thousand disorders; and falling continually from one sin into another, I beheld myself at last in the abyfs of wickedness, and at the gates of hell.

VI. Behold what my misery is, but thou art my Lord, and with thee there is mercy, Ps. cxxix. 4. I have strayed, O good shepherd! I have sinned, O divine Jesus! behold what I am capable of. Thou hast said, *that man lives not by bread alone*, but by all the works of thy hands, the goodness of thy heart, and the sweetness of thy words. If therefore, O Lord! I cannot cease from being thine, and if thou art wholly mine, how can I die? Open thy treasures, O infinite bounty! elevate my lowliness, fortify me against my enemy, pardon me my past weaknesses, render me life and strength, and make me fight for the future with a courage equal to the cowardice I have hitherto had.

But I can neither fight nor overcome without thee. Thou art my head, thou hast overcome my enemies by thy humility, and thou hast left it to me as a buckler impenetrable to all their darts. I own, O God! that I can do nothing without this divine virtue; and though I should not acknowledge it, my own failings would bear witness against me, since I have fallen through my pride into an abyfs of miseries, out of which I cannot come without thy assistance. My present will is to offend thee no more, and never to follow that of my enemy; but I also know very well, that I shall not have the strength to resist him, unless thou fightest for me.

AN EXPOSITION of the CXXIX. PSALM.

De profundis.

By way of prayer against temptations.

From the depths I have cried to thee, O Lord! Lord hear my voice.

I Acknowledge, O my God! that thou hast exalted me to a sublime state; that thou hast loved me, and encompassed me with thy mercies; but I have plunged myself into the mire of earthly affections; I have thrown myself into the snares of my enemies, into a gulph of miseries and blindness, and into the deep abyss of all vices. I have buried myself in that obscure prison; I have fettered myself in those chains which oppress me, and which so weigh down my soul, that I cannot look up to heaven, nor be sensible of thy divine favour. Thou seest the state I am in, and forbiddest me to despair.

Therefore from the depth of my darkness, languishing, consumed and miserable, I presume, O God of mercy! to elevate to thee my hope and dejected eyes. How unworthy forever I am of being regarded and heard, I conjure thee to look upon me in thy goodness, and to hear the lamentable cries which my miseries send forth to thee.

II. *Let thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.*

Tho' I have been always deaf to thy voice, O be thou not so to mine: and let that same paternal love, whereby thou hast commanded me to hear thee, move thee this day to hear the prayer I make to thee: for if thou hearest me now of thy goodness, and healest me, O charitable shepherd! I shall always for the future be attentive to thy voice; I shall follow it faithfully, and shall never depart from thy will.

III. *If thou wilt mark iniquities, O Lord! Lord who shall stand it?*

If thou examinest the number and greatness of my sins; if thou inflictest with rigour the punishment they deserve, what hope can I have? I Shall I find in myself wherewith to satisfy for all the debts I have contracted by my offences? If thou dost not mitigate the severity of thy justice in regard of me, what shall become of me? to whom shall I have recourse? I am lost without redemption; because I can expect no remedy but from thee alone, O my God whom I have offended.

IV. *Because with thee there is merciful forgiveness.*

Remission of sins, compassion, and goodness are only to be found in thee. Thou wast pleased that I should expect

my remedy only from that hand which is able to punish me : for every thing besides thee rises up against me, and condemns me justly ; my sins and ingratitude, thy benefits which I have not made good use of, thy law which I have violated, thy enemies whom I have followed, and all thy creatures which I have abused in offending thee, demand from thee the just chastisement which I deserve. I am myself the greatest of my enemies, and my conscience continually upbraids me for all the sins I am guilty of. Whither then shall I go to seek for refuge ? We can only find in thee alone, O my God, that patience which suffers all things, and that mercy which pardons all things. If thou shuttest thy paternal bowels against me, there will remain no other refuge nor hope for me.

V. *And for thy law I have expected thee, O Lord !*

Thou hast commanded me to hope always in thee, to invoke thee, and to have recourse to thee in all my troubles. Thou hast been pleased that thy justice should overlook the sins of men. Thou hast imposed on thy mercy the obligation of receiving the penitent sinner, and of pardoning him, whensoever he shall bewail his sins. I present to thee, O Lord ! these so amiable laws, and am certain thou wilt not repeal them. I cast myself at thy feet, and I am ready to undergo all the punishment I deserve, and hope from thee all the mercy I have need of.

VI. *My soul hath relied on his word ; my soul has hoped in the Lord.*

Thou art true, O Lord ! and never failest in thy promise. Thou dost not call us to destroy us, but to give us life. Thou offerest not thy mercy to refuse it to those who return to thee, but to receive them with paternal goodness : in this thy word it is my soul hopes, and this strayed sheep presumes to return to the fold.

VII. *From the morning watch even until night, let Israel hope in the Lord.*

Or according to the Hebrew version : *My soul expects God more than the sentinels expect the morning.* As the guards who stand centry impatiently expect the day, to rest themselves after their night's labour ; so my soul supports itself by the hope it has in thee. When I am surrounded with the darkness of my sins, and the dangers of temptation, I encourage myself with the expectation of thy presence, which alone can revive my languor and fortify my weakness. I hope to see by means of thy light, to be supported by thy power, and to resist my enemies with thy assistance. For if thou visitest my soul, its darkness shall be dissipated, its enemies shall take flight, its sins shall appear no more, and thou wilt give me constancy
necessary

necessary for persevering in the night of tribulation, if thou permittest it to return.

VIII. *Because with the Lord there is mercy; and with him plentiful redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*

The treasures of mercy are in thy hands; and those liberal hands are always open for distributing them. For when thou hadst once resolved to remedy my evils, what hast thou spared for my delivery from thence? Thou hast given me whatever thou possessest, hast promised me whatever I can desire, and hast provided for all my necessities. Thou hast encompassed me on all sides with thy bounties, hast taken my miseries upon thyself, hast shed thy blood, and sacrificed thy life for me. Thou hast given me a right to thy merits, hast overcome my enemies, hast opened the gates of heaven, and hast made me heir of all the wealth of thy kingdom. Accomplish thy work, O charitable Redeemer! and let not the temptations of my enemy, and the weakness of my flesh render such an abundant redemption unprofitable to me. Support me by thy power, protect me by thy mercy; that I may always love thee, and faithfully resist every thing that displeases thee, and is capable of separating me from thee.

O Queen of angels, refuge of sinners, faithful dispensatrix of the divine goods! come to my help in the time of temptation, repel the fury of the serpent, whose head you have brused, dissipate the powers of hell which have plotted my ruin, and never suffer me to yield to their efforts. You blessed inhabitants of heaven, ye victors crowned with glory! who have experienced our dangers, and now enjoy the sweetness of eternal repose; with your prayers assist this miserable traveller, always exposed to shipwreck, and continually beaten with the waves of temptation; that he may one day enjoy with you the fruits of your victory. *Amen.*

XVII. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

The rudeness of his disciples.

AFTER having overcome the devil, our Saviour had another war much more violent to carry on against the world, against the errors and malice which reigned therein.

He

He began to teach in the synagogues to the admiration of the people, and especially of those who had known him at *Nazareth*, and who having always considered him as an ordinary man, were surprised at his doctrine. When he had resolved to go through all the towns of *Judea*, preaching and working miracles, and to manifest himself to the world, to shew its errors, and to bring it back into the way of salvation; he chose twelve apostles, and several other disciples, after treating about that affair with his eternal father upon a high mountain, where he spent the whole night in prayer. To teach us; first, what care he took about those things which regarded our salvation. Secondly, from whom we ought to ask counsel in our affairs, whose success cannot be truly happy, unless they are concerted with God, and undertaken by the motion of his spirit.

But altho' the evangelists do not distinctly shew the vocation of each of them, it is certain that our Lord declared to them in his discourse at the last supper, that he had chosen them to be the princes and pillars of his church. *You chose not me*, says he to them, *but I chose you; and have appointed you, that you go and bear fruit; and that your fruit remain*, Jo. xv. 16. He chose also, some time after, other seventy two disciples, whom he sent through all *Judea*, with the power of working miracles, commanding them to go to all the cities and villages whither he was to come after them, declaring the kingdom of God, and healing the sick. They executed his orders with great zeal; and those among them that remained with Christ until his death, greatly assisted the apostles in the preaching of the gospel. *St. Matthias* was chosen from amongst them to fill up the place of *Judas the traitor*; and the whole world was filled with the admiration of their sanctity, with the fruits of their labours, and with the fame of their miracles.

II. *St. Paul* exhorts us to consider, as a thing worthy of astonishment, the choice which our Saviour made of those men, for converting the world: *consider brethren*, says he, *your being called, that not many are wise according to the flesh, not many powerful, not many noble: but God hath chosen the foolish things of this world, to confound the things that are strong: and God has chosen the mean and contemptible things of the world, and the things that are not, to destroy the things that are: that no flesh may glory in his sight. But from him you are in Christ Jesus, who of God is become wisdom to us, and justification, and sanctification, and redemption; that as it is written: He that glories, let him glory in the Lord. For therein appears the divine power, which erects so magnificent an edifice upon such weak foundations.* 1 Cor. i. 26, &c.

One

One of the greatest obligations we have to Christ, is for having communicated his gifts to us through such channels, that we may carry our thoughts unto the fountain, and acknowledge the hand from whence all our blessings descend. He has thereby confounded all the wisdom of the world: and because he foresaw that this corrupt world would not submit to faith, and would contradict his doctrine, he was pleased that the sages of the world, who could not arrive at the knowledge of God by their own lights, should be instructed by what is most obscure, that is, by poor fishermen.

But all that could not be done without a great deal of labour: for what pain and humiliation was it for our Lord to be always with men that were rude, dull, ignorant, and despicable in every respect; who had nothing of what was necessary for so great a work; and whom he was consequently obliged to instruct, polish and cultivate continually with an extreme care, and an indefatigable patience, in order to render them capable of receiving the fulness of the Holy Ghost.

III. It will seem perhaps that I injure the simplicity of the apostles, by putting it in the number of the sufferings of Christ, who always treated them as his children, and foresaw that having received the Holy Ghost, they would labour in the Lord's vineyard, even to give their lives for his glory. But I am certain they will not take it amiss that I here relate what their beginnings were, and how much their instruction cost that heavenly master: since they themselves acknowledged it afterwards much better than I can express it. That thought was to them a continual subject of humiliation and surprise. They could not be wearied with admiring the divine mercy, which had raised them from extreme weakness to so high a degree of perfection. They preserved a most tender acknowledgment for him, who had winked at and supported with a most paternal goodness such monstrous defects, in order to draw such great advantages from thence. And they did not think they could sufficiently repay, for the pains they had occasioned so amiable a father, by their services, labours, or shedding all their blood. But though his paternal love greatly mitigated to him the pain he had in supporting their weaknesses, yet we are no less indebted to him on that account: on the contrary that facility proceeding only from the greatness of his love, still redoubles our obligations.

IV. The

IV. The Son of God having therefore assembled some disciples, for the most part fishermen, rude in their views, judgments, and affections; he bore with them as a father, and instructed them as a master, with all the patience they then stood in need of: for their minds being heavy and attached to the earth, did not elevate themselves to divine things.

When Christ spoke to them of the kingdom of God, they imagined nothing beyond the temporal kingdom of *Judea*; and each of them thought of holding the first rank therein: some because they had been called first; others because they were our Lord's relations according to the flesh; all of them from mean and human reasons. And as such thoughts are always accompanied with many other defects, they promised their kindred riches, dignities, and favour.

Whilst the Lord spoke to them of the highest mysteries of religion, at his last supper, where he instituted the sacrament of his body and blood, they disputed among themselves who should be the chief, even making use of the interest of others, for obtaining what they desired; and *John* and *James* employed their mother to ask for the first places. They were weak; often wavered in the faith; and abandoned their master in the time of his passion: *Peter* denied him; *Judas* betrayed him; others doubted, and with difficulty believed he was risen again. Even when he was preparing to leave them, in order to ascend into heaven, they were still possessed with the thoughts of his temporal kingdom.

Several of those disciples, by hearing him say, he would give his body to eat, and his blood to drink, were scandalized; and some went away. When he spoke at supper of the necessity of spiritual arms, for overcoming temptations, they ignorantly answered, that they had two swords; and having protested that they would die with him, they fled at the first sight of danger. When they felt any motion of zeal, they were for making fire descend from heaven upon those who refused to hear them; and seeing others cast out devils in the name of Jesus Christ, they were jealous of them; and warmly complained thereof. They committed also many other faults, which shewed the narrowness and dulness of their minds.

V. Notwithstanding Christ bore with them, he reproveth them with goodness, and instructed them with as much familiarity and mildness, as if they had been perfect men. He treated them as his equals; gave them reasons for his conduct, as to his companions; defended them as his children against those that assaulted them; and discovered to them his designs and the most profound mysteries of his kingdom, as to his confidants, although they grossly understood every thing. He kept them near him whilst he spoke to the people, assembled

them before prayer, visited them from time to time during his prayer, exhorted them to love prayer and to persevere therein, and the extreme care he took of them, appeared in all his actions. If he spoke sometimes obscurely in public, and if he concealed the secrets of his doctrine under parables, he explained them afterwards in private to them, shewing thereby that they were dearer to him than all others. He answered their questions, how gross soever they were, as if they had been reasonable and full of good sense.

Although their manners, minds and behaviour were quite opposite to his infinite wisdom, he never expressed either displeasure or uneasiness with them: on the contrary he concealed their defects, overlooked their ignorance, bore with their rudeness, and supported the whole weight of a conversation which could not be agreeable to him but only through the love he had for us. In fine, he had them always with him, accessible, in his journeys, in public and private, within and without, till he had raised them to an eminent degree of virtue and wisdom. He sowed in that uncultivated ground the divine seed, which was afterwards to bear fruit an hundred fold, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and comforted himself in all his pains, with the hopes of a plentiful harvest, that is, with the conversion of the world.

This is a great subject of reflection for us, to see the eternal wisdom speak in the midst of those ignorant men, of what most sublime, and labour so long in making them esteem and relish the heavenly truths, which it could in a moment have imprinted in their souls, as it did afterwards, by sending them the Holy Ghost. Certainly the apostles could not afterwards remember the mildness of Christ, without being penetrated with love and confusion. That reflection humbled and inflamed them at the same time. It cannot be comprehended how sweet it was for them afterwards to spend themselves in the service of so amiable a master, and to give their blood and life for him.

VI. The conduct our Lord observed in regard of his apostles is a wonderful instruction for all those who labour in the conversion of souls. By his divine sweetness he accommodated his zeal to their capacities, not urging them too much, for fear of destroying instead of edifying; not exaggerating their faults, because they proceeded rather from ignorance and simplicity than from malice; and because the apostles had not as yet sufficient light to know wherein they failed. He inspired them by degrees with humility, in joining example to words, and applied himself to correct them, not by the rigour of his reprimands, but by the sweetness of his conversation.

He knew that the human heart is not capable of great virtue, but when it is inflamed with the divine love; even as the iron cannot be made pliable, unless it be thoroughly heated by the fire. He knew also that we more profitably recover our vices in the beauty of virtue than in their own conformity, which is only discovered in proportion as the love of God is established in us.

Thus it is we ought to deal with our neighbour; bearing with his faults till he knows them himself, and endeavouring at the same time to move him mildly to the love of virtue: this means we shall the better dispose him to receive grace, the light of which will afterwards discover to him the true value of every thing: *Jacob shall not now be confounded*, said the prophet *Isaiah*, xxix. 22. *neither shall now his countenance be ashamed when he shall see his children, the works of my hands, in the midst of him sanctifying my name.* Because the time of his shame was not come, he esteems vanity, he still loves the evil he has done; but when he begins to resolve to serve God sincerely, when he will be sensible of the obstacles he has put thereto, he will blush at the baseness of his affections, and the falsehood of his judgments.

A great deal of prudence is necessary for profiting by those circumstances, in the conduct of souls. St. Paul gives this advice to the perfect: *Galat. vi. 1. if a man be pre-engaged in any fault, you that are spiritual, instruct such an one in the spirit of mildness, reflecting on thyself, lest thou also be tempted.* And the prophet *Isaiah* foretold of Christ, that *the bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench*, Isa. xlii. 3. For though the smoke be incommodious, yet it shews some remains of life; and prudent charity, far from extinguishing it, awakens it, as one may say, by its breath, in order to make it increase. However we must observe, that this mildness is commonly profitable to those who desire to be spared continually in their faults, and that it is good to use a little rigour in regard to them; because there appears to be malice in them, and knowing their own weakness, they testify thereby their willingness to persevere therein. There are often found in religious communities such kind of spirits, who would have their superiors accommodate themselves to all their inclinations; but the same charity which inspires that condescendance in certain persons, who, by reason of natural weakness, cannot elevate themselves higher, forbids it in regard of those from a too great attachment to their own will, renders difficult to be brought to obedience.

VII. What ought here to comfort us in the little good we do, is, that Christ received the services and good-will of the disciples, though it was very imperfect, with as much goodness

as he afterwards accepted of their labours and heroic actions. He said to them the night before he died: *I will not now call you servants, because a servant knows not what his master does. But I have called you friends; because I have made known to you, whatever I heard from my father, Jo. xv. 15.* And elsewhere, *you are they who have remained with me in my temptation. Luke xxii. 28.*

Consider who it is that says these things, and to whom he says them; it is the son of God who speaks thus to those who had already expressed so much weakness, and who were to testify still more the ensuing night. He favourably received from them the least actions of an imperfect virtue, to teach us that he is always satisfied with what we do for him, when we do what we can; that the simplicity and purity of our intentions make him excuse the defects of our works; that a very little good on our part is sufficient for drawing upon us the treasures of his mercy; and that he considers in the present grace which he communicates to us, the satisfaction he will receive from us hereafter.

A great instruction both for those that command and those that obey! It is an extreme imprudence in superiors to exact all things from all persons, and to lay the same burthens on the strong and on the weak; since they ruin the principles of good government thereby. And it is a lamentable weakness in inferiors, to complain that more is laid upon them than upon others who have fewer talents than they. Thus a prudent director ought carefully to examine, what those who are subject to his conduct can do, according to their strength and grace. He ought to bear with the weak, assist them in what they are capable of doing, exhort them to continue, and to expect nothing from them beyond their power: otherwise he will discourage them, make them abandon the exercise of virtue, and entirely ruin them at last.

VIII. Jesus Christ, for two reasons, chose rather to bear with the imperfections of his apostles, than to make them perfect all at once.

First, to shew us in them how earthly affections hinder the communication of the Holy Ghost, the gifts of perfect charity, and that intimate union with God, to which we are called. For whilst they were attached to the corporal presence of our Saviour, by a sensible love, they were incapable of receiving the divine light; and it was necessary for him to depart from them in order to purify their love.

Secondly, because being appointed for great things, for which they needed to receive extraordinary graces, they ought first to be humbled; that being afterwards filled with the Holy Ghost, they might despise themselves by the remembrance of their ancient meanness. Those pillars of the church needed

to have foundations of humility proportioned to their elevation; and nothing was more capable of establishing that virtue in them, than the knowledge of their own miseries.

IX. God deals in the same manner daily in regard of those, whom he elevates from earthly love to the contemplation of heavenly things. He bears with their weakneses, ignorance, complaints, and their other imperfections. He comforts them sometimes by his presence, and then afflicts them by concealing himself. He makes them feel sometimes the sweetness, and sometimes the severity of his spirit. He raises them up with great care; he supports them and humbles them; he chastises them and caresses them; he restrains them and excites them, as a father full of goodness, who makes himself a sweet occupation of the education of his children.

The apostles were not the sole objects of his friendship; he still stretches out his arm to us all, his power is not diminished, his goodness is always the same, and he has no less care at this day to maintain his spirit in every one of us, than he formerly had to preserve it in his disciples. Wherefore we ought to have the same acknowledgment to this charitable father as they had; and we shall be no less saints than they were, if we are as faithful.

CONTEMPLATION

in Christ, in his patience in bearing with the defects of his disciples.

SHOW me interiorly, O Lord! the time wherein thou wouldst have me to bless thee; and imprint in my heart all the acknowledgment I ought to have for thy benefits. Thou callest us all, but who can come to thee, if thou dost not bear him up? Thou wilt have all men to love thee, but who shall love thee, if thou dost not give him thy love? Thou wilt be known by the whole world, but who can know thee without thy light? The necessity I have of thee is born and encreases with me; the obligations I lie under to thee urge me continually; but I can only satisfy my obligations and gratitude by thee; and without thy goodness, without thy help, and without thy conduct what can I do, O thou God of my soul? cast then upon me the eyes of thy mercy; give me those interior ears which make thy voice be heard. Give me the desire of following thee, the ardour of seeking thee, and the strength to come to thee. Give me the knowledge of my miseries, that I may fear them; and the sight of the dangers of this life, that I may avoid them.

I confess, O Lord! that I am unworthy of the favour I beg of thee; that I even deserve to be punished, and cast far from thee, for presuming to ask new favours, after having abused those which

which thou hast already bestowed on me, and without having expiated the sins I have committed against thee. But the sinners whom thou hast received, the thief to whom thou gavest paradise, and the sinful women whom thou didst fill with thy grace, support my confidence, and give me hopes thou wilt not reject me: for they could never have been converted, nor sought, nor followed thee, if thy light and divine power had not excited them interiorly.

Why should I not, O divine Jesus! expect all from thee, since, in order to declare thy truths to me, thou hast sent me angels from heaven, but ignorant, weak, and sinful men, in whom I see no less the defects of our nature, than the gifts of thy grace? Such were thy disciples, even when they were with thee; ambitious, jealous, vain, wavering in the faith, and full of base views, and terrestrial affections. Thou didst choose them nevertheless such as they were, and leddest them with thee every where.

There was one among them that was a publican, another that was to deny thee, and a third that was to betray thee, and whom thou wouldst yet have forgiven, after so great a crime, if he had begged thy pardon. They were almost all so weak, that they abandoned thee, and so heavy that their minds were always fixed to the ground. They had the divine light before their eyes, and saw not: they were fed with the bread of life, and were not fortified thereby.

As the best of fathers, thou treatedst them with a charming sweetness, and they did not learn to love thee. Thou wast their defence, and they were afraid of every thing. Thou communicatedst thy divine secrets to them, and they did not believe thy spirit of thee in order to penetrate the depth of them. Thou promisedst them eternal blessings, and they had nothing but temporal views. Thou taughtedst them a heavenly doctrine, and they profited not thereby. What do I say, O Lord! they beheld him with their eyes, whose life was the admiration of angels, enriched heaven, filled paradise with joy, and they knew him not.

II. Why didst thou suffer them, O Lord! to be at the same time so near and so far from thee? How couldst thou restrain thy love so long, and not inflame them at first with that divine fire? Why didst thou wait till they should see thee no more, for bestowing thy gifts upon them, since thou lovedst them so tenderly? Without doubt it was on my account, O eternal wisdom! that thou dealtest so with them: for I am persuaded that it would have been more agreeable to thee to have reigned absolutely in them from the first moment of their vocation, to have purified the bottom of their hearts, to have possessed them entirely, and to have filled them with the riches of thy grace.

race, as thou didst afterwards. But thou didst judge it more proper to bear with their defects for some time, to shew me in those, who were to be the masters of christian perfection, the pillars of the truth, and the light of the world, what I ought to hope for from thee, and that all my miseries are not capable of stopping the course of thy mercies.

O certain refuge of thy poor creature! it is not only in thy father's house that there are many mansions, there are also many in thy heart, since thou receivest all into it. St. Thomas, though incredulous as he was, the thief, the publican, the leper, and the public sinful woman, find place therein; and Judas himself would have been received into it, had he not voluntarily abandoned himself to despair. It is in that loving heart that darkness is dispelled, imperfections are consumed, terrestrial affections are destroyed, interior troubles are composed, and the whole man is sanctified.

III. What then! shall this heart so great, so open, so charitable, be shut against me alone, O my God! and shall not thy miserable creature find a place in it, where it may behold all its vices destroyed, and its spirit renewed by the power of thine? I adore thee, O divine heart! wholly burning with the flames of pure love. I adore thee, O eternal light! O sun that always rises and never sets! Fountain that flows without ceasing, and never diminishes! Ocean of infinite blessings! Sweet refreshment of travellers! Comfort of all those that weep! refuge of those that are tempted! Sanctuary for all sinners! Receive me, O divine Jesus, into that heart, where I presume to hope that I am written by thy eternal love. Where shall all my weakness be consumed, except in that furnace of love? And if there be not room for all, now, O my God! art thou the Saviour and redeemer of all?

It is true, my vices are much greater than the imperfections of thy apostles: for they proceeded only from weakness, ignorance, and simplicity. They did not leave thee, they accompanied thee every where, in prayer, in thy journies, at table, in labours, and in poverty. They remained with thee in thy temptations, they loved thee in such a manner as they could, and their defects were not capable of separating them from thee. But mine, O Lord! proceed from malice. I fly without being pursued; I depart from thee daily; I am inconstant in thy service; and I do not even stay for the temptation to abandon thee.

Thy disciples heard thee with eagerness, and I shut my ears against thy word. They humbled themselves when thou didst reprove them, and I excuse myself when corrected. They addressed themselves to thee in their miseries, in order to be cured of them, and I am filled with presumption in mine.

Their

Their simplicity attracted thy love, and my pride renders me worthy of thy hatred. O heavenly physician! who seest the depth and corruption of my wounds, couldst thou bear the horror of them, if thou hadst not for me the tenderness of a father? Wouldst thou expect me so long, if thy heart was not full of mercy? Wouldst thou forbid me to despair if thy sweetness was not ineffable? Wouldst thou invite me to receive such great blessings, if thy liberality was not infinite?

Is it thou then, O divine Jesus! that seekest me? and art thou him whom thou desirest to unite to thee? Behold me here before thee, O my love and sovereign good! who hinderest thee now from obtaining what thou desirest? who stops the execution of thy designs? wouldst thou have me remain such as I am? Wilt thou still bear longer with me? Art thou resolved to leave me separated from thee in the region of the shadow of death? Why dost thou not cast thy eyes upon me? Shall I be the only one whom thou forgettest? Why dost thou not raise me up again, O thou life of my soul! O my salvation! why dost thou not heal me? I will not leave thee till thou hast changed me entirely into thee; I will embrace thy feet; I will remain fixed to them, and will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

IV. What dost thou desire of me, O Lord? Wouldst thou have me to repent, to amend my life, to love and serve thee, and to persevere in thy love and service? I will do it, O my God! as far as I am capable: yes, I will be wholly thine, to love thee always, and never to forsake thee; I will do whatever thou desirest of me: support my will and my weakness. I am willing, but I neither know how I will, nor how long this will shall remain. I even feel myself already drawn back towards the earth by my own miseries, which follow me in all places. It seems as if they were afraid I should forsake them, and my flesh prepares to assault me violently. Thou who supportest me by thy goodness, fight also for me by thy power. Defend me, O Lord! Let thy eyes behold in my soul the fruits of that so ancient and so paternal love. Destroy by the consuming fire of thy spirit, every thing in me that displeases thee, and make me such as thou wouldst have me.

V. I cannot complain of thee, O father of mercies! I can only complain of myself: for thou hast always filled my soul, how miserable soever it has been. Even when I fled from thee, thou didst take away the snares that were set before me. Thou didst put a stop to death's career lest it should surprise me before I had returned to thee. Thou inspiredst me with what was profitable for me. Thou calledst me back in a thousand different manners. Thou didst often create me perplex-

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ing affairs, that being wholly employed, I might offend thee the less. Thou didst permit me to be tempted, to shew me the danger I was in ; and sometimes even to be overcome, to convince me of my weakness. Thou didst reduce me to dreadful extremities, that I might be sensible of the necessity I had of thee ; and though I have grievously sinned, I should have done it still more, if thy goodness had not deprived me of the occasions thereof.

Thou hast never totally withdrawn thy hand ; I have always experienced thy help, and thou hast even changed all things for me into good, even my sins ; by permitting my presumption to be humbled. If I returned to thee, thou didst immediately receive me ; and filledst me with the sweetness of thy presence. Thou didst bear with my lukewarmness. Thou didst accept the weak desires of so imperfect a virtue. Thou didst excite me to renew the resolutions of serving thee ; and shewedst me clearly in my infirmity, that I could not accomplish them without thy grace.

VI. I should never finish if I were to relate all thy mercies in particular. For how many favours hast thou not bestowed on me ? How many crimes hast thou not pardoned me ; thou hast always had paternal bowels towards me ; thou hast not turned away thy countenance, in spite of the perfidies of my ungrateful heart, which promised thee every thing, and performed nothing. Thou didst hear my desires, though thou foresawest the sterility and inconstancy of them. I immediately returned back, thou beheldest my relapses, and bearest with them ; thou didst sweetly raise me up again, and restoredst me to thy friendship, which I was basely to violate shortly after. Was there ever beheld a father more meek, a mother more affectionate, or a friend more faithful ?

What thanksgivings shall I render thee, O divine Jesus ! I owe thee more than thy disciples did : They exercised thy patience only during three years, and I have fatigued it my whole life. They spent the greatest part of their lives in thy love and service ; and mine has entirely passed away in tepidity and sin.

I am more indebted to thy mercy, than all the world besides : for there are an infinity of men whom thou permittest to err in faith, whilst thou preservest me therein. Thou sufferest them to adore idols, and to follow delusion, whilst thou illuminatest me with the purest lights of thy truth. Thou permittest others to persevere until death in their disorders, whilst thou shewest me mine, and givest me grace to forsake them, or at least, that of praying to thee for that end. In fine, thou pardonest me as many sins as I should commit, hadst thou not the goodness to preserve me from them.

I adore

I adore thee, O my Saviour! and thank thee as much as I am capable of, for all those favours, and for infinite others which I know not. Let all the saints and angels in heaven join with me in blessing thy holy name, and of singing thy mercies eternally.

VII. Thou, O Lord! who knowest that what hinders me from profiting by all those graces, is that I have not recourse to thee in all my necessities, and that I love something besides thee, which I love not for thee. Purify my heart from those unworthy attachments, and permit me not to have any other master, any other counsellor, any other judge, or any other friend but thee. For though in appearance, nothing but what is great can be agreeable to thy infinite greatness, yet I know, that pure simplicity pleases thee, that thou dost not judge it unworthy of thee, to enter into the particulars of our necessities, to take an account of our steps and motions. If thou knowest the number of the hairs of our head, and of the leaves of the trees; why shouldst thou not also know that of our looks, our breathings, our thoughts, our desires, and of all the moments of our lives?

If thou hadst appointed only one hour every year to give me audience, to supply my wants, and to declare thy will to me, ought I not to sigh after that hour during the whole year, and prepare myself to treat with thee, to hear thee, and to receive thy benefits, which would be the food of my soul for the whole ensuing year, till the return of that happy hour? Whence comes it then that I do not converse with thee every moment as with a wife and faithful friend, and with a powerful protector, whom neither the government of the universe, nor the weight of all eternity hinders from thinking of me.

Why do I not come, in my troubles, to lay open my heart before thee; to expose to thee the words which offend me, the thoughts which grieve me, and every troublesome thing that befalls me? Why do I not take care to offer thee all my actions, since thou vouchsafest to accept the little I do for thee? If I were faithful in this practice, thou wouldst heap blessings upon me: because if for tepid prayers, and for weak desires, thou grantest me a thousand times more graces than I can merit of myself; what would it be, if I should offer thee all, and if I were wholly thine?

VIII. There is one thing wanting to me, O my God, which alone could restore me, and without which I do not even feel the evils which surround me on all sides; it is humility, which is the fountain of all blessings. Thou knowest, O Jesus! the most humble of all men! that I can only by it obtain the diffidence of myself, the fear of displeasing thee, and the happiness of sighing continually after thee: it alone can teach me

how important it is for me to know thee, and I know how agreeable it is to thee. Humble me, therefore, as much as thou pleasest, O humble Jesus! establish in me that virtue which is so dear to thee, and which is the guardian of all others; that I may fear myself, seek thee, and be entirely subject to thy conduct; and being disengaged from myself, I may live no longer but for thee, O divine Jesus! my master, my support, my comforter, my salvation, my love, my sovereign happiness, and my true life.

O most humble hand-maid, and most worthy mother of God, you who never were separate from him! since he was not only content with being my refuge, but he was also pleased that you should be my advocate, refuse me not your protection. Although you are exempt from my miseries, you are the daughter of Adam, take pity on your flesh, and obtain me the spirit which animated your conduct. And ye, O holy Apostles! who were the light of the world, procure me those graces of conversion which you carried thorough the whole world; compassionate my failings, since you were subject to the same, and beg for this poor sinner the holy ghost, who made you perfect: *Amen.*

XVIII. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

His Journeys.

THE divine shepherd began with his little flock to run over *Palestine*, and to gather together the strayed sheep of the house of *Israel*. His care extended further afterwards; and to fill up the places of those, who, by their blindness and obstinacy, were to reject his words, he prepared himself at that time to draw all the nations of the world unto him. But that the *Jews* might have no reason to complain, he omitted nothing on his part for their conversion; he declared to them the Kingdom of heaven, the law of grace, and the divine riches which he had brought them.

Although he was the true *Messias* whom God had promised them so long, whom their fathers had so earnestly desired, and whom they themselves ought to have sought after, since he particularly came for them; he sought them first in the profound forgetfulness of their salvation wherein they lived, called them, offered them his grace, and spared neither care nor labour for instructing them, for withdrawing them from their vices, and for heaping his favours upon them.

Having therefore left his most blessed mother, under whose obedience he had lived so meekly for several years, he went to *Capharnaum*. This was a city of *Galilee*, situated on the confines of the tribes of *Zabulon* and *Nephthali*, near *Jordan*, by the side

of

of a salt lake, called the sea of *Galilee*. Those two tribes being fallen into a great disorder of manners, were ruined with the rest of the kingdom of *Israel*, composed of ten tribes, of which the city of *Samaria* was the capital: but it was so full of crimes, that it drew upon itself the wrath of God, and was entirely destroyed by pestilence and war.

II. It was then at *Capharnaum* that Christ began to preach his gospel, according to that prediction of *Isaiah*, ix. 1, 2. *At the first time was the land of Zabulon alleviated, and the land of Nephtali—the people that walked in darkness, hath seen great light; to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen.* There he spread his doctrine so abundantly; there he wrought so great a number of miracles; and there he was so often, that he commonly called it his own city. For, as it is not said, that the sun, in steering its course through the heavens, rises to enlighten them, but to enlighten the earth, subject to the obscurity of night, and to the change of seasons, so Christ, the sun of the heavenly city, which suffers neither shadow nor vicissitude, arose not upon it, but upon sinners, whose days are short, and nights gloomy; and who have such long nights, and such thick darkness, that the region they inhabit, ought to appear uninhabitable to them.

He calls *Capharnaum* his own city, only because he there found whereon to exercise his zeal, and to work the wonders of his power: and this is a great subject of consolation for us, that our Saviour, who is the eternal light, vouchsafes to rise upon sinners, to visit those cold and obscure regions, to warm them by his heat, and to render them capable of producing the fruit he expects from thence.

III. This divine sun having then appeared upon an earth covered with the darkness of sin, visited all the desolate cities of *Israel*, whose number in *Joshua's* vision, amounted to three hundred, without reckoning either those that were built since that time, or the castles, and other small places. The tribe of *Juda* alone had a hundred and fifteen cities. Christ entered into the synagogue, to declare to them the kingdom of God; he went into the gardens and upon the mountains, there to spend the night in prayer; into the houses to heal the sick, and to instruct every one therein. He wrought miracles in the public places; assembled the people in the fields and on the river-sides, to preach penance to them: fed them even sometimes miraculously; raised the dead; rejected no person; drew sinners to him, by the odour of his divine virtues; and filled them with admiration and joy, by the sublimity of his doctrine, and the sweetness of his grace.

He also visited every place both on this and on the other side of the sea, after having sent his disciples thither to declare

his coming. And though the places were large enough for employing seventy-two disciples, to which he distributed them; he himself went over them all one after another. He remained in each of them as long as was necessary; when he departed from thence, he left his holy spirit therein, which caused the divine seed to spring up which he had sown therein.

IV. Such were the continual cares, desires, labours, and journeys of Christ. He walked on foot into a very rough country, among stones and rocks, in valleys and on mountains; suffering cold and heat, wind and rain; and found himself often so fatigued, that he was forced to stop in the way, to take a little rest.

When he was arrived at his journey's end, he began to instruct the people, and to work the wonders of his power and goodness. Whilst his disciples were thinking on his corporeal necessities, he was always employed about the salvation of souls. In some places they received him well, and in others ill: sometimes they even drove him away; and then he retired without complaint or murmuring; always as patient in injuries, as he was liberal in pouring his blessings on those whom he found disposed for receiving them.

His disciples being one day provoked, and desiring to bring down fire from heaven upon that ungrateful people, he said to them with his ordinary tranquillity, Luke ix. 55. *You know not of what spirit you are*: shewing thereby, that his spirit was the spirit of peace, meekness, patience, and longanimity, which waits for the sinner, and offers him grace without doing him any violence. As they were dissuading him on another occasion from going into *Judea*, where he had been in danger of being stoned some time before, he answered them, *Are there not twelve hours of the day*, in order to teach them, that apostolical men employed eleven of them profitably in expecting and having patience, when people received grace in the twelfth; after having rejected it during the preceding hours. John xi. 9.

V. Thus it is this divine Saviour behaves towards men at present; he invites them by his benefits and grace; and when they refuse it, he retires always with trouble: and instead of rejecting them with the just indignation this refusal deserves, he returns again at another time and knocks at the door; that if he finds the will disposed to receive him, he forgets the affronts which were put upon him, and treats us as if we had prevented, sought, and received him with joy, every time he had come to us.

It cannot be told, how many graces our Saviour bestowed on men, in all those places through which he passed: for though the evangelists have related a great number of his wonders, St. John affirms, that if it had been necessary to have written them all,

all, the whole world would have been full of books, And yet all *that* was done, not in many ages, but in three years, not by others, but by himself. He designed, no doubt, to shew us, by the small time he took in working such great things, that a short life full of good works, is infinitely better than a long and unprofitable life: and that much time is not necessary for acquiring many virtues and merits.

If God should behold in us *days* well spent, and a life wholly employed in his service, he perhaps would shorten the time of our banishment; and being enriched with his blessings in a few years, we should the sooner be conveyed into his kingdom. But because the greatest part of our life is spent in sins, we have need of time to bewail them, to expiate them, and to merit heaven; and this God of goodness often prolongs our banishment, only because he expects our conversion.

The just dead, says the scripture, *condemns the impious alive*, and *youth soon ended, the long life of the unjust*, Wis. iv. 16. For the just man, in the few years he lives on earth, acquires spiritual goods sufficient for himself and to impart to others; and youth well employed, holds the rank before the Lord of an honourable old age, and full of merits. But the long life of the sinner, who passes so many years without thinking of his salvation, is full of sins and wholly unprofitable.

This made *Seneca*, a *Pagan* philosopher, say, that the wicked die not: for it is not to be perceived, how he can die that lived not; and how he can end his life who began it not. But it may be affirmed with more truth, that the sinner dies continually, because he never learns to live. For as that cannot be properly called life, which is deprived of the good things that make us live eternally; so he who lives only for eternal death, begins to die before he begins to live, since he is never in the way of true life. Thus those who live long, without living christianly, resemble a ship tossed with a tempest, that suffers great agitations, and makes but little way.

VI. The just man, who is wholly employed about his salvation, and the service of God, finds in a few years much time for prayer, fasting, and penance; for assisting his neighbour by his counsel, example, and charity; for bearing the crosses which providence sends him; and for practising the other christian virtues; because he makes good use of all these moments, and every thing becomes to him an occasion of merit. Whereas he who neglects the care of his salvation, and thinks only on satisfying his irregular desires, has need of much time for pleasures, gaming, diversions, intrigues, ambition, and vanity, in order to satisfy a multitude of false decorums which the world exacts, and which God does not require. He should

should have as many lives as there are different occupations, among which he is obliged to divide that short, only, and uncertain life, which God has given him for meriting eternity.

Hence it is that if he has any resolution of thinking on himself, and on his salvation, he finds no time; because worldly amusements deprive him of the best part of it; and it is only when he must die that he begins to see what he ought to have done for living well. But as things which are done in haste, are scarcely ever found ready for the moment they are necessary, man who delays till that last hour to labour for his eternal salvation, can he in so short a time, oppressed with pain, seized with fear, and disturbed by a thousand thoughts, be able to prepare that nuptial garment, without which none enters into the hall of the celestial banquet? And if he fails in what he ought to do at that last moment whereon eternity depends, what loss! what misfortune! and what despair must follow!

VII. Our Lord, in the three last years of his pilgrimage, found time enough for visiting all those cities; for restoring health to the sick, and life to the dead! for taking several very painful journeys; for suffering many labours and torments; for dying; for rising again; and for ascending into heaven; because he applied all his thoughts to the work of our salvation, for which his father had sent him. Thus after such great fatigues, his sweetest repose was to be able to do good to men, and he went into no place without leaving the marks of his zeal for our salvation therein.

He sat down one day to refresh himself, by a fountain side, near the city of Samaria. It is easy to judge, by what passed there, with what thoughts he was taken up, and what could ease his labours. For whilst his disciples were gone to fetch some victuals, having desired a sinful woman that was come thither to draw water, to let him drink, and she having refused him for a very bad reason, *viz.* out of the aversion the Samaritans had for the Jews; our Saviour, who earnestly desired the salvation of that poor creature, not to lose so favourable an occasion, spoke to her immediately of those divine waters, which from the heart of the just spring up into life everlasting. John iv. 14.

When he had produced in her the desire of so salutary a water, in order to remove at first what might be an obstacle to so great a blessing, he shewed her, with an admirable sweetness and wisdom, the dangerous state she was in; and because the knowledge and faith of the mediator was necessary to that sinners for her conversion, he declared to her what he had never spoke so distinctly, neither to the people in public, nor to his apostles

apostles in private, that he was the Messias whom God had promised, and that he was come no less to save her than to save all the rest of the world. Thus being enlightened and converted in so short a time, she published every where the wonders of the divine grace.

The disciples came afterwards, and desired Jesus to eat of what they had brought; but he answered them, that *he was nourished with a food which they knew not*, that is, with the accomplishment of his eternal father's will, concerning the salvation of souls.

Whilst he was speaking thus, there came some inhabitants of *Samaria*, who carried him back with them, heard him, and acknowledged him for the true Messias. Behold what his food was that day; it was the only food that could satisfy him, and it always appeared infinitely delicious to him.

VIII. The divine goodness having therefore resolved to deliver us from the superfluous cares of this life, has commanded us to *seek first the kingdom of God, and his justice*, Mat. vi. 33. For when we make the affairs of this world our chief occupation, it always happens, either that they do not succeed, or are done only with extreme delays, or the success we expect is not worth the pains they give us, or they are crossed with a thousand disappointments, or in fine, they are full of chimerical designs, which unprofitably consume our whole life. He only enjoys true peace who seeks God before all things; because nothing happens to him from whence he draws not some advantage: for in the loss of temporal goods, he enriches himself by his patience, comforts himself with the blessings he receives from God, and finds, in the very prosperities of this world, a source of merits for heaven.

IX. When the desire of heaven is well established in the heart, one is content with a little on earth; but when one has not that desire, the whole earth is not sufficient. The bad rich man in the Gospel, in the abundance of wealth he possessed, had never enough, and refused a little bread to poor *Lazarus*; and when from the bottom of hell, whereinto he was fallen, beholding *Lazarus* in *Abraham's* bosom, he begged of him only a drop of water to cool his tongue. Since it was sufficient for our Lord, in order to appease his hunger, and refresh himself after his fatigues, to seek our salvation, to remedy our evils, and to enrich our poverty, is it not just that our food should be to love him, serve him, and please him?

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ in the fatigue of his journeys.

O DIVINE power! who art the strength of the weak, and the relief of sinners. O my God, my Lord, and all my hope! what shall become of me if thou dost not cast upon me the eyes of thy mercy? How long ago wouldst thou have abandoned me, and I should have been lost, if thou hadst regarded my sins to have punished me for them, and not to have pardoned me them? How many times should I have offended thee, and where should I have been now, if thou hadst left me to follow my own desires? I live only by thy goodness; and if I am not fallen into the abyss of all miseries, it is because thou hast supported me with thy hand, hast supplied by thy merits the want of mine, hast not rejected me, and hast always made me hope for pardon; and because thou still invitest me to the participation of thy blessings.

Is it possible, O Lord! that thou art willing to have so miserable a person with thee? Can so great a corruption remain with so much purity; and shall my meanness presume so much as to lift up its eyes towards thy greatness? What union can there be betwixt my poverty and thy riches, betwixt a leperous soul covered with ulcers and him who is happiness by essence, betwixt such thick darkness and so pure a light? Thou beholdest me, O Lord! such as I am, that is, more miserable than I imagine; but thou art so great, so powerful, so high, that thou canst be perfectly known only by thyself, and thy greatness comforts me in my meanness.

II. O God of my heart! who wilt not abandon me, because thou hast made me for thyself, but on the contrary wilt thyself enlighten my darkness, heal my wounds, expiate my sins, instruct my ignorance, and enrich my poverty; thou knowest what I am without thee, and thou alone knowest how I can become thy temple in the midst of so many miseries. For that reason it is thou wouldst separate me from myself, and unite me to thee. But if it be so great an advantage to me, and if thou desirest it so earnestly, what can keep me one single moment at a distance from thee?

I, who by the continual need I have of thy help, ought to invoke thee at every hour of the day and of the night, am quite dumb, and it is thou that callest me. I who have so much

interest in knocking continually at thy gate, remain unconcerned, and it is thou that urgest me. I who ought to be always attentive to the least sign of thy will, am deaf to thy most certain orders, and thou must sollicit me, for engaging me to obey thee.

Is it possible, O Lord! for the guilty to refuse pardon, and for the offended to make all the advances? for the creature to fly, and the creator to seek him? for the sick not to desire his health, and the physician alone to desire it? for him that is wounded to love his wounds, and thou, O my God! to feel the pain thereof for him? Behold how far my misery extends, O my God! and how far thy mercy!

III. O that I were as sensible of my evils, as thou art! that I abhorred them as much as thou dost? that I were as desirous of forsaking them, as thou art to deliver me from thence! and that I did for myself what thou dost for an ungrateful servant, I should not be in the state I am.

Thou, O divine Jesus! who knowest the greatness of my sins, the evil they occasion me, and the blessings they deprive me of, who beheldest long before I was in being, how insensible I should be of my own ruin; who wast concerned thereat for me, and hast suffered so much to heal me; thou hast taken care to prevent and seek me. Thou hast shewn thyself, O divine light! *to those that sat in the shadow of death*: thou hast run after thy strayed sheep. O charitable shepherd! amongst the rocks, over the mountains, in the valleys, and through the cities and villages; overwhelming that innocent body with a thousand fatigues, which thou wast not obliged to hasten, since it followed the motions of thy will without resistance. Thou excitedst all hearts by the sweet violence of thy charity, to love thee, to seek thee, and to receive thee; thou filledst them with an heavenly doctrine, with the admiration of thy works, and with the sweetness of thy grace.

How many blessings didst thou bestow upon sinners, in the midst of so many labours which thou sufferedst for them! and how much gratitude ought my heart to have for so many painful courses and tedious journeys!

IV. When any one invited thee, thou wentest to see him, didst overlook his little faith, hadst the goodness to supply his wants, didst recompense him by most abundant graces for the little good he did thee, and thou even soughtest those who invited thee not, because thou knewest the want they had of thee.

Thou camest upon the sea shore to take fishermen, in order to make them thy disciples. Thou didst go to meet an afflicted widow, to raise up her son, who was dead in the city of *Naim*. Thou didst approach the pool, to heal a paralytic that was forsaken by every body. Thou madest a journey to *Tyre* and *Sidon*, to meet with the *Cananean* woman. Thou enteredst into the house of the pharisee, to sanctify a sinful woman; and into *Peter's* to assist his mother-in-law. Thou tookest the road along which thou knewest *Zaccheus* was to pass, and bestowedst a thousand blessings on him and on his house. Thou soughtest the *Samaritan* woman with a great deal of fatigue, to make her taste the sweetness of thy grace. Thou visitedst sinners, and didst eat with them, in order to teach them heavenly truths. Thou wentest to meet the blind, to restore their sight; the possessed, to deliver them; the lepers, to heal them; the afflicted, to comfort them; those that were gone astray, to bring them back again into the right way; the obdurate, to soften the hardness of their hearts; and thou didst not make one step but in order to do good.

When thou wast weary and obliged to stop at any place; when the winds and rains made the roads difficult for thee to pass, the misery of so many strayed sheep, and the danger they were in, permitted thee not to take that repose thou hadst need of. The days appeared to thee too short, and the nights too long; and thou never foundest time enough for satisfying the zeal wherewith thy heart was devoured.

Though the people followed thee in crowds, through the fields and over the mountains, to hear thy doctrine; and though they found with thee the nourishment both of body and soul, yet thy charity was not satisfied; and thou wentest also into every part, to seek those whom the negligence of their salvation, or the care of temporal affairs, hindered from following thee. Thou couldst not suffer that any one should desire thee in vain; thou presentedst thyself to all those that sought thee, and even calledst those that sought thee not.

V. Open, O divine shepherd! the eyes of my soul, to make me see that I am truly that lost sheep which thou hast sought with so much perseverance, and with such great labours. For that divine voice called me then; that mercy invited me; that doctrine instructed me; the hope thou gavest sinners supported me; thy miracles healed me; thy labours refreshed me; and those eyes which converted hearts, looked on me with pity. Thy body was there, but thy spirit was with me. There thou bestowedst thy blessings on men, but thou

calledst me to give me a share of them. What return shall I make thee, O Lord! for so many favours?

O divine Jesus! since thou hast sought me with so much pains, grant that they may not be unprofitable to me. I am no less miserable than those amongst whom thou livedst, and thou art my Saviour as well as theirs. Give me therefore a place with thee at *Matthew* the publican's table; let me enter with thee into *Zaccheus*'s house; suffer me to embrace thy feet, and to water them with my tears, with *Magdalen*; let me beg of thee, with the *Cananean* woman, some crumbs of thy celestial bread; and with the *Samaritan* woman, a little of that water which purified her in a moment.

But if I am unworthy of all these favours, hear at least, O charitable shepherd! the voice of this sick sheep, that cries after thee; say only one word, and it shall be healed. Thou assured us, O Lord! that though thou wast first sent to the lost sheep of the house of *Israel*, yet thou hast still others whom thou wilt draw from the east and from the west, that they may not perish. I am one of those; thou knowest my misery, seest my wounds, and the pitiful state the infernal wolf has reduced me into, when I departed from thee. Bring me back into thy fold, grant me to hear thy voice, to follow thee always, and to go only into those pastures to which thou shalt lead me.

VI. O heavenly father! who beholdest me, and whom I do not behold, grant that I may see thee as thou seest me, and that I may know thee as thou knowest me. Thou seest my interior poverty, and how far distant I am from thee; for this reason it is that thou seekest me with so much care. Thou seest, O eternal sun! how blind I am in the knowledge of thy perfections, therefore thou risest upon me, and comest to enlighten this region of darkness. O that thou wouldst descend into my interior miseries, which I cannot sufficiently know, nor confess! Thou beholdest them, bearest with them, and commiseratest them; but thou beholdest also the blessings thou possessest, and which might make me happy, and I behold them not.

No Lord, I do not sufficiently comprehend that thou art my father, my spouse, my shepherd, my food, my head, my soul, my treasure, and my beatitude. I know not the love wherewith thou supportest me, but by feeble comparisons; the beauty of thy works, but by conjectures; and thy infinite blessings, but by the crumbs which fall from thy table. I see not that immense ocean of riches which is in thee, and which is all for me: and though I believe my faith is cold and languishing, because I have neither the knowledge nor experience of pure love.

Blind wretch that I am! I know not whither I am going, and I advance continually towards those things which still increase my blindness. O divine light! which is never extinguished; O eternal splendor! which suffers no eclipse; O day ever shining! O sun that never sets! since thou diffushest every where so great a brightness, why art thou hid from my sight? or why am I like those birds of darkness, that never see less than at mid-day? Thou hast enlightened so many obscure places, for once enlighten my soul, that it may see and be enamoured of thy beauty.

VII. Thou seest nothing in me, O divine Jesus! that can comfort thee; but if I beheld thee, if I knew thee, what could hinder me from loving, embracing, and possessing thee? Discover then to me, O king of glory! the charms of thy beauty; enter into and reign in my soul; open this iron gate; break down this brazen wall; soften the hardness of this heart; and penetrate the bottom of this obscure den whither thy enemies retire; dissipate them by thy presence; and return victorious, O divine shepherd! bearing in thy arms thy recovered sheep; heal it of all the evils it has suffered from the fury of the wolves; make it acknowledge thee, and never forsake thee. O when will that happy moment come!

When shall I behold thee, O my God! as thou beholdest me? When shall I love thee as thou lovest me? When shall I be wholly employed with thee as thou art with me? If thou seekest sinners only for the good which is in them, alas, O Lord! we are so poor and miserable, that thou wilt always labour in vain: but if thou seekest them to communicate thy blessings to them, come, O my salvation! give me what thou plearest, and thou wilt find in me what thou desirest.

VIII. How important is it for me, O my God! never to be separated from thee! When I behold men like myself as unprovided with reason, and so great enemies to themselves as to reject thee when thou comest to them, I cannot but cry out: O blindness of the human heart! O foolish temerity! to imagine that in losing thee, we shall be able to find something better than thou art!

Moses illuminated with thy light, did not consent to leave thee, till thou hadst promised to accompany him, and to be his guide in the desert; but the unhappy people whose conduct thou hadst entrusted him with, and who had not enjoyed the sweetness of thy communications, made themselves a golden calf, which they adored as their god. So true it is that he who knows thee, is afraid to be without thee one single moment; and he who knows thee not is insensible

insensible of the misfortune of being separated from thee. Make me sensible therefore, O thou God of my soul! of what it is to lose thee, that I may never live without thee.

IX. But, alas! how often have I banished thee from my heart! how often have I rejected thy inspirations, and refused thy company! this is so great a matter of confusion to me, that I know not how I dare appear before thee, O my God! what did I seek for when I forsook thee? whom would I have obeyed when I disobeyed thee? what did I gain when I lost thee? Have mercy on me, O Lord! I have compared thee with thy works; I have preferred my own corrupt desires a thousand times to the sanctity of thy law.

May all my veins be changed into fountains of tears, and may I weep night and day at thy feet, that I may obtain thy mercy. I have abandoned thee, O my life! and what life have I expected without thee? I have banished thee, O thou faithful friend of my soul! and where could I find a friend like thee? I have shut the entrance of my heart against thee, O fountain of all blessings! and what good remained in me when I was separated from thee? What confusion ought I not to have, what sorrow ought I not to feel, in confessing before thy majesty so great a misery? How can I expiate the outrage I have done thee! Look upon thyself, O thou love of my soul! before thou lookest on me, consult thy own heart before thou examinest mine, and regard what thou art before thou considerest what I deserve.

What then restrained thy hand! what hindered thee from bringing down fire from heaven to consume me; from opening the earth to swallow me up; or from delivering me to the cruelty of my enemies? But rather what obliged thee to return so often to knock at the door of my heart? to call me, to urge me? was it not my duty to have sought thee? It was thy infinite love, O my God! which solicited thee continually to prevent me. O love that hast spared me, defended me, and supported me; and that still drawest me to thee! Thou art my creator, my protector, my salvation, my physician, my father, my Lord, my only remedy, and my whole happiness; help me, change me, and heal me.

Come speedily, O divine love! for my heart sighs after thee; enter in, for the door is open to thee; help me, since I invoke thee; receive me, since I come to thee; conduct me, since I resign myself to thee; and possess me, since I unite myself to thee: begin this very moment to reign for ever in my soul, which is
willing

Willing to serve thee, which desires thee, seeks thee, and embraces thee, O my love! O my Jesus! O my sovereign good!

O divine Mother of God! you who always received into your bosom that divine Saviour, and never forsook him, not even when he departed from you to seek me; receive me into the number of your servants, give me some small place in your house, that your well beloved Son who takes a pleasure in abiding with you, may dwell with me with you. O celestial choir! O blessed servants of the house of God! since ye are so agreeable to him, and since I was created to be the companion of your happiness, possess him not without me; obtain me the grace never to go astray in this miserable world, and to sigh continually after the end of my banishment, that departing from this world, I may be received with you into the eternal tabernacles, and there sing for ever the victory of the Lamb. *Amen.*

XIX. SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

The hardness and obstinacy of the Jews.

THE fatigue of the roads was not the severest thing in our Saviour's journeys; the obstinacy of the *Jews* was his greatest pain. This was a vice at all times inherent in that nation, and sacred history relates an infinite number of examples thereof. For although God had preferred the *Jews* to all other people, and had wrought prodigies in their behalf which astonished the universe, so many blessings were unable to reduce them to a constant fidelity to him.

He had made them descend from the blood of the holy patriarchs *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; he had carried them in his arms, according to the expression of the scripture; he had heaped benefits upon them, had promised them the *Messias*, had sent them several prophets, had chastised them in their disorders as his own children, had received them into favour when they returned to him, had provided for all their necessities; and being prevented with so many graces, yet they had shaken off the Lord's yoke; always rebellious, always murmuring, always perfidious and perjured, even after the most sacred promises.

They

They were ready to stone *Moses* their leader in the desert; made themselves a golden calf to adore it in the sight of God, who spake to them from the midst of flames; they killed the prophets, set up idols in the temple, sacrificed to the gods of the gentiles, and abandoned the God of their fathers.

This hardness of heart is still to this day an hereditary evil in them; they preserved it among barbarians, in the miseries of a cruel captivity, and under the most terrible chastisements of the divine vengeance. Convinced of their errors by the sacred books they have in their hands, they still resist the light, so far as even to glory in their obstinacy. They always believe themselves the true children of *Abraham*, and the favourite people of God, though they be given up to a *reprobate sense*, deprived of heavenly blessings; and though they retain nothing of their ancient worship but the name of God, *whom they honour with their lips, whilst their heart is far from him.* They are even fallen into so great a number of errors contrary to the divine law, and have defiled the purity of the sacred scriptures with so many absurd fables, that the prediction of *Isaiah* is manifestly accomplished on that unhappy nation. *For wisdom, says that prophet, shall perish from their wise men, and the understanding of their prudent shall be hid, xxix. 14.* Or, according to the interpretation of *St. Paul*, *1 Cor. i. 19. I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, says the Lord, and I will reject the prudence of the prudent;* that is, as *St. Augustin, Sermon 2, de Epiph.* explains it, that nothing remained with the *Jews* but the sacred writings, whose light served even to blind them the more, whilst the *Gentiles* and the most barbarous nations were enlightened thereby.

In a word, when the *Jews* were obliged to observe the law of *Moses*, they could not be made obedient thereto; and since they were freed from it, they will stiffly retain it. Nothing more is wanting with them, for compleating their blindness, and for verifying all the prophecies, but to follow antichrist, after having refused to acknowledge the true *Messias*.

II. Those that are now living, still possessing the same obduracy as their forefathers, it is easy to judge how much that ungrateful and obstinate people have exercised the meekness of Christ. *Moses* could not bear with them, though he was the meekest of all men; they stoned the prophets that were sent to them from God. In fine, all the means that God made use of for bringing them back to him being unprofitable, he sent them his only son, as the final remedy, and instead of receiving him, they nailed him to the cross, and made him die in torments.

Although

Although the purity of his doctrine, the greatness of his miracles, and the multitude of his benefits, were capable of softening the very stones, yet scarcely could he find twelve apostles, a small number of disciples, and some devout women that would follow him. If there were any persons more considerable, who acknowledged him for what he was, they concealed their sentiments for fear of others; and even when they beheld that what had been foretold of the Messiah, was accomplished in his person, they shut their eyes, retired, set snares against him, contradicted his doctrine, discredited his miracles, and fell into a horrible ingratitude: for after seeing Christ heal their sick, and raise up their dead, they sought the means of destroying him.

As he was one day explaining to them a place in *Isaiab*, which was accomplished in him, they drove him out of the city, and led him unto the top of a high mountain, in order to cast him down from thence. They could not bear that he should work miracles on the Sabbath-day; they proscribed those that followed him; in fine, they shewed on all occasions their obstinacy, and the hatred they bore him. He knew their thoughts, and discovered them often to themselves: he answered all their questions in a convincing manner, confounded their priests in the presence of the people; and though these were touched with his doctrine and miracles, yet they ceased not to follow their chiefs, to conspire against him, to demand his death, and to take the vengeance of his blood upon themselves and upon their children.

III. That ever incredulous nation opened not its eyes to the light, and awakened not from the deep negligence it was in, neither by the arrival of the wise men, who published the birth of our Saviour, nor by the joy of the shepherds who had seen the new-born infant, nor by the testimony of *John Baptist*, nor by the sound of a heavenly voice which was heard at his baptism, nor by his presence, nor by the sanctity of his doctrine, nor by the virtue of his miracles, the effects of which they saw upon themselves, upon their relations, children, neighbours, and friends. And yet more, when the rocks were rent, the earth quaked, the sun was darkened, and an idolatrous centurion confessed that Christ was the true Son of God, that unhappy people persisted in their obstinacy, and were hardened daily more and more.

Our Lord expressed to them, on a thousand occasions, how sensible he was of their obduracy. He represented to them the example of the *Ninivites*, who did penance at the preaching of *Jonas*; and that of the queen of *Sheba*, who had come so far to bear the wisdom of Solomon, *Matt. xii. 41, 42.* He upbraided them for
being

being more obstinate than *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, than *Tyre* and *Sydon*; and told them those criminal cities *would have done penance in sackcloth and ashes*, if they had seen the miracles which they saw, *Matt. xi. 21.* He complained with sorrow, that *often would he have gathered them together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and they would not*, *Matt. xxiii. 37.* He set their obduracy before their eyes, sometimes by parables, sometimes by questions he proposed to them; and he convinced them by their own answers, in which they condemned themselves, without being willing to amend. When he entered into *Jerusalem*, amidst the acclamations of the people, *he wept over that city*, *Luke xix. 41.* which was to draw down so many misfortunes upon itself, by the obduracy of its inhabitants. He was sensibly affected, because after rejecting the true Son of God, they were one day to receive antichrist, in punishment of their blindness.

To comprehend with what sentiments of grief and compassion he beheld the *Jews* running to their perdition, we need but consider, with what application he laboured for their salvation, although he laboured in vain therein. Their obduracy was so great a pain to him, that he thought proper to prevent his disciples thereupon, that finding in their brethren a like obstinacy, they might not lose courage, but might be comforted by the example of their master, who, though he was the Son of God, could not overcome the obstinacy of the *Jews*, nor engage them to embrace his heavenly doctrine.

IV. We may see particularly in two things, how great an evil obduracy is; First, because a limited goodness could never have borne with it, and to pardon it is the utmost effort of an infinite goodness. For, to receive him that submits himself; to pardon a guilty person that acknowledges his fault, is the effect of an ordinary mercy; but to do much for an ungrateful wretch, that does not concern himself about it; to suffer much for a miserable creature, that will reap no profit thereby, is the property of an immense and incomprehensible goodness.

When *Moses* so earnestly begged pardon for those who had made themselves a golden calf, to adore it; and conjured God, by such pressing motives, not to abandon those in the desert whom he had brought out of the captivity of *Egypt*, by such great prodigies; all that he could obtain, was that God should not exterminate them, but that he would give them an angel to conduct them in his stead; and God gave no other reason of his anger, but *that his people is stiff-necked*, *Exod. xxxii. 9.* that if he walked in the midst

of

of them, they would still provoke his just vengeance, and that he should at last be obliged to destroy them all, in order to punish their obstinacy.

Moses having begged at the same time to see the face of the Lord, if he had found favour before his eyes, and the Lord having promised, that he would shew himself to him, but only so far as was necessary for assuring him, that he was agreeable to his majesty; the glory of God passed before *Moses*, who was sensible of it, without seeing it, and heard these words: *O the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion, and true, who keepest mercy unto thousands; who takest away iniquity, and wickedness and sin, and no man of himself is innocent before thee. Who dost render the iniquity of the fathers to the children, and to the grand children, unto the third and fourth generation.* Exod. xxxiv. 6.

At this voice *Moses* prostrated himself before the Lord, making use of these so sweet words which he had suggested to him, he conjured him again to vouchsafe to accompany his people: for since, said he, they are so hard of heart; since they are so indocile, an angel can never be able to bear with them! none but thou, O Lord! whose goodness is so great, that thou dost not punish sin beyond the fourth generation, and extendest thy mercy to thousands; there is none but thou that canst pardon such ingratitude. God was moved with the prayer of his servant, pardoned the people, and promised that he himself would continue to conduct them.

Secondly, what also clearly shews the greatness of this evil, is, that Jesus Christ, the master and model of all perfection, seems to have reduced his whole doctrine to this single point, which is that we should *learn of him to be meek and humble of heart*, Matt. xi. 29. because sincere meekness and humility are the foundation of all other virtues, an excellent disposition to the divine light, and to all the gifts of grace; and are directly opposite to hardness of heart. For why does man so obstinately refuse to bear the Lord's yoke? Where can he place his confidence more securely? where can he find a more solid support? and what is he himself but a vessel of clay full of mire and corruption?

Why does the Son of God abase himself so far as to suffer our continual disobediences? why does he restrain his anger? why does he not reduce these worms of the earth into dust, that presume to resist their creator? but because he desires that our unworthiness should serve to make his mercy resplendent. He abases his majesty, conceals his power, and becomes to us a model of meekness and

and humility, that he may confound the pride and obduracy of the human heart, so rebellious to the divine will. This made St. Paul say these terrible words, admiring man's obstinacy: *knowest thou not that the bounty of God leadeth thee to penance? but according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou bearest up to thyself wrath in the day of wrath.* Rom. ii. 4, 5.

V. There is no vice more contrary, not only to the spirit of God, but even to the nature of man, who being subject to change, can pass from evil to good, and be governed by reason, than this invincible obstinacy. The angels had no remedy after their sin, because they are naturally incapable of changing, when they have once chosen; and it had been unprofitable to have given them more leisure, for examining the resolution they were to take; since they knew at first every thing they could have known in a longer space of time. But man, because of the dependance he has of the body; not seeing things all at once, has need of time for considering them: hence it is, that he may know his wanderings, change his resolutions, and correct what he has done amiss. Thus when he hardens his heart, he renders himself, contrary to his own nature, like those rebellious angels, remains like them inflexible in sin, and justly suffers the same punishment after his death; since he had the same obduracy in his life time.

An adherence to our own judgment and will, is the common source of so great an evil: we do not sufficiently know the fatal consequences of this vice; we even make it sometimes pass for virtue; but if we are not careful to correct it in due time, we become by degrees so attached to our own sense, in the grossest errors, as if they were the clearest truths; and fall at last into an entire obstinacy, like that of devils.

VI. Hence arise divers sorts of obduracies, which lead as it were, by so many degrees, to that infernal obstinacy. For first, the habit of following only our own lights, renders a man less faithful in observing the law of God; and he more easily takes the liberty of sinning, though he does it not yet, without scruple, but by his frequent failings, and the little care he takes to amend, he falls into an interior weakness: he would gladly be able to leave that state, but he finds no disposition in himself for weeping for his past faults; though he acknowledges them, and has some inclination to detest them. This evil is not also without remedy, but methinks the most efficacious of all is to cast ourselves at the feet of Jesus crucified; to humble ourselves before him, as far as lies in our power, with an entire diffidence of ourselves; and earnestly to beseech

beseech him to make appear in softening the hardness of our hearts, the divine virtue of his precious blood.

I have known a sinner, who, being willing to forsake his sin, and not being able to bewail it as much as he desired, left his house one day, oppressed with grief, without knowing whither he went, to seek some consolation: as he went out, he found a poor man at his gate, whose misery appeared extremely great; he was moved thereby, and remembering that our Lord had said, that he would consider as done to himself what one should do *to the least of his brethren*, Matt. xxv. 40. he returned into his house with that poor man: and giving him alms, he cast himself at his feet, as if he had been in the presence of Christ; in that humble posture he said in his heart to Christ, whom faith made him behold in the person of the poor man: Lord Jesus, thou art in this poor man; O that I could give thee my heart! but it is so hard that I dare not offer it to thee, and thou wouldst not receive it: accept in the mean time of this bread which I can give thee at present, and make of my heart in time coming, whatever thou pleasest. This humility was so efficacious, that he immediately felt his heart softened, and his eyes bathed in tears, and God bestowed on him afterwards very great favours.

VII. When we neglect to remedy the first obstinacy, we fall into the second, which consists in loving sin, in living in it with a false peace, and in being willing to persevere therein. We know the evil, but we have no inclination to bewail it, nor resolution to resist it; and man then is much more sensible of the pleasure of sinning, than of the experience of his misery.

Those who are in this state, being on the point of stifling their small remains of good sentiments, have need in the first place to frequent the sacraments; that, by often renewing in themselves the spirit of grace, they may acquire strength necessary for resisting sin. Secondly, they ought to submit themselves to the conduct of a prudent confessor, who, knowing their temptations, inclinations and affections; and the occasions they are in, may apply suitable remedies to their disorders. For if those remedies are then neglected, the sinner will soon arrive at the height of obduracy, wherein his evil will be incurable; because he is insensible, and refuses all remedies. Here follows the third and last degree of hardness of heart.

Then the sinner can no longer suffer either counsel or reproof; he is ashamed to amend, glories in his obstinacy, and arrives at such a point of it, that if he had before conceived any design of changing

changing his life, an advice or exhortation thereto, would be enough to hinder him from doing it. He looks upon the most charitable correction as an affront; the most wholesome advice, as violence done him, and he rather chuses to renounce all fear of God, than the least human respect.

If a man that is in such a deplorable state, uses not his utmost endeavours for departing from thence; he builds a brazen wall between God and himself, accustoms himself to his wounds, and becomes so corrupted, that he turns his remedy into poison, and the good that is offered him often does him more injury than the evil he has committed. Such formerly was *Pharaoh*, whose obduracy increased daily, by the prodigies he beheld. Such were the *Jews*, of whom *Isaiab* foretold, *that seeing they should not see*, who were so blind as to oppose their own cure, whom the instructions and benefits of Christ rendered still more criminal, and who became more wicked, by every thing that was capable of making them become better. Would to God that this obduracy had ended with them! but, alas! it is still to be found to this day amongst christians; and though our Saviour feels it not in heaven, whither sorrow does not ascend, it is certain, that it was present to his mind when he lived on earth, and that he was even more concerned thereat, than at that of the *Jews*.

To abandon men to their passions, and allow them to sin as much as they please, is the most dreadful chastisement of the wrath of God, and the beginning of that eternal dereliction which is to continue in hell. This hardness of heart is the source of all great evils: it was it that fastened the Son of God to the cross, that persecuted the church, that made heresies spring up, that corrupted so many souls, and spread so many errors against the faith, and law of God. In a word, it is the mother of damnation, that brings forth children for hell. But since Christ by his presence could not overcome the obduracy of the *Jews*; what ought not he to fear, who far from that divine Saviour, spends his life in obduracy, in the arms of the devil?

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ concerning obduracy.

O JESUS! meek and humble of heart, son of the living God, Lord and master of my soul, powerful and charitable physician! thou hast no less power to heal my evils, than patience to bear with them, since thou bearest with them only that thou mayest cure them. Permit them not to augment, to become incurable, nor to separate me for ever from thee, O my salvation and life! Thou knowest how many reasons I have for distrusting myself, and for imploring thy mercy continually. Continual dangers of losing thee arise in me, and I cannot be saved but by thee.

Thou hast said that *a good man out of the good treasure of his heart, brings forth good things; and an evil man, out of an evil treasure, evil things*, Matt. xii. 30. Who is truly good, O Lord! if thou art not; and who is truly bad, if I be not so? It is from my heart that all the evils proceed which thou beholdest and bearest with; those affections which remove me from thee; that interior deafness which hinders me from hearing thy voice; that obstinacy which renders me rebellious to thy orders; that tepidity which makes me lose the relish of thy truths; that negligence in thy service, and all the other faults which displease thee in me.

My ruin has no other source than my own heart; and yet this source by force of flowing and casting out all its impurity, becomes at last clear, pure, and agreeable to thy eyes! But alas, O Lord! it contains much more corruption than it expels; and so there is always something to be purified, and all the evil it has not and produces not is a gift of thy grace. For when I withdraw from thee, I am capable of all evil, and unworthy of any good. As thou hast given me a heart proportioned to the greatness of thy blessings, when it is empty of them, there is no evil but what finds place therein. Assist me, O divine virtue! and come to my help: for the abyss of my misery cannot be filled, but by the ocean of thy mercy; and thou alone canst expel from my heart, the poison that has entered therein.

II. O my creator! who hast formed me of the same mass with the rest of sinners, I am a greater sinner than others; or if I am less so,
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it is to thee that I am indebted for it. The *Jews* were and are yet to this day the children of *Adam* as we are: thou honouredst them with thy promises, and heapedst thy favours upon them: thou livedst amongst them, and taughtest them thy divine truths: thou wroughtest thy wonders before them, and shewedst them in thyself the perfection of all virtues, and the accomplishment of all the prophecies; and they knew thee not.

Thou didst shine continually before their eyes, O eternal light! and their darkness increased daily: thou discoveredst their faults to them, and they saw them not: thou endeavouredst to gain them by the attractives of thy sweetness, and they became more intractable thereby: thou wouldst have entered into their hearts, and they shut the door thereof upon thee. Thou wentest to their houses, spoke to them with goodness, and healed their diseases; and they refused to acknowledge thee. They even hated thy light, thy truth, thy works, thy life, thy person, and preferred their own evils to thy blessings. Thou deploredst their misery, and they rejoiced therein: thou labouredst to withdraw them from it, and they remained always attached thereto: and this attachment made them shun both the physician and the remedy.

Is it possible, O divine Jesus! that darkness should be stronger than light; that it should increase near thee, and that thou shouldst endeavour in vain to dispel it? Thou couldst not overcome the obduracy of the *Jews*, neither by the benefits thou bestowedst upon them, nor by the evils from which thou deliveredst them, nor by the eternal pains with which thou threatenedst them, nor by the charms of thy presence and conversation. From whence comes that, O Lord? is thy power diminished, and is that fountain of living water dried up? Thou diedst for them; they are washed in thy blood, and are not softened thereby? and they still persist with their posterity, in the same obstinacy. They invoke thee, pray to thee, praise thee, and acknowledge thee for their God, in the holy Scriptures which they have in their hands; therein they read continually thy words, benefits, and wonders; and will neither acknowledge nor love thee. How can I behold this terrible punishment, O my God! and not tremble for myself?

III. No person has done violence to them, none has either blinded nor hardened them; they have blinded themselves, they have hardened themselves. Hell has known thee, O Lord! the devils have trembled at thy word, death has obeyed thee, the beasts and elements have heard thy voice; heaven which had been shut against the just, was opened at thy command, to receive the good

good thief: and hearts whom thou createdst for thyself, who are thy proper abode, and whose happiness thou art, know thee not, desire thee not, and receive thee not.

What shall become of me, O my God! if thy grace abandons me? How many times have I felt in myself this interior obduracy; and if it has not yet ruined me, is it not an effect of thy mercy? No sooner was I born, than thou filledst me with thy grace. How many times since hast thou called, urged, and solicited me? How many misfortunes and dangers hast thou shewed me, for obliging me to return to thee? How many sins hast thou pardoned me? how often hast thou borne with me? how many truths hast thou taught me? how many graces hast thou granted me? Whence comes it that I am so miserable?

I complain not of thee, O Lord! I know that my evil proceeds from myself alone. Thou art always with me, but I am not with thee: I confess my faults to thee, but do not amend them. I receive thy holy body, I keep it within me; and yet I hear thee not, love thee not, and find thee not. O divine Jesus! my obduracy is greater than that of the *Jews*. But they believed not in thee, and I believe that thou art the Son of the living God; they received thee not, and I receive thee. It is true that I cease not to live in my sins, to entertain my imperfections, and to remain in my miseries: and perhaps, O my God! I still love them: for if I hated them truly, I should be delivered from them. Have mercy on me, O Lord! soften the obduracy of my heart; permit it not to augment, and to separate me from thee. Cast thy eyes upon this sinner, who is the work of thy goodness, and the price of thy blood; and since fire breaks stones, break the obduracy of my heart by the fire of thy love.

IV. Thou canst not say, O Lord! that thou hast the will to do it, but hast not the power. The sinful woman in the gospel had a hardened heart, but it was softened at thy feet: are those sacred feet less powerful now than they were then? She lovingly embraced them, and for my part I find them pierced with nails and ready to diffuse over me the virtue which proceeds from them. If she obtained her conversion by the tears wherewith she bathed them, thou canst, O Lord! make mine flow abundantly, and thus dispose me for the other graces thou designest me. Her heart sighed after thee; mine also sighs; but if my sighs are not fervent enough, supply them with what is wanting.

Be not thou hardened, O my God! towards this poor sinner, who desires nothing so much as to be able to melt with love for thee.

thee. *St. Peter* was so obstinate in renouncing thee, that if thou hadst not looked upon him, he would have renounced thee still; but he was softened and converted by a single motion of thy eyes. Have those eyes then lost the virtue of mollifying hearts? Cast upon me such a look, O father of mercy! and I shall be healed. What was the thief's obduracy, when he was crucified with thee? He had offended thee all his life, and blasphemed thee also at his death; but the virtue of thine changed him in a moment, and opened paradise to him.

Must I be the only person that shall not experience the power of him, who, being exalted from the earth, draws all to himself? Remember me, O Lord! though I be so unhappy as to forget thee. Thou didst not wait for *Paul's* praying to thee, when *breathing* nothing but *threats and slaughter*, he persecuted thy faithful servants in hatred of thy name, *Acts ix. 1.* He was overthrown and mollified by that very name he persecuted, and became a vessel of election to carry that divine name to all nations. He cried out shortly after: *I live, now not I: but Christ liveth in me*, *Gal. ii. 20.* and he loved thee so fervently, as to have the confidence to affirm, that there was neither any thing in heaven nor on earth, nor in hell that could tear from his heart the love wherewith he burnt for thee. Allow me to cry out with him: *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* And with *David*, *teach me to do thy will: conduct me into the path of thy commandments; and under the shadow of thy wings protect me.* *Psal. cxlii. 10. cxviii. 35. xvi. 9.*

V. But what will it avail me, O sweet Jesus! to beg of thee that tenderness of heart I desire, if I harden myself, if I render myself deaf and insensible to every thing that is most necessary for me. I find thee hard only when I am far from thee; and thou art meek and easy to receive me when I return to thee. I cannot complain of thy conduct towards me: I ought on the contrary to bless thee always, O Lord! because having come to thee, loaded with sins, obdurate and dejected, I returned from thee comforted, mollified and full of confidence.

I will confess it before thee, O Lord! to my own confusion, and to the glory of thy mercy. When, overlooking my miseries, thou permittedst me to approach to thee, and to embrace thy feet when thou vouchsafedst to hear the words which proceeded from my lukewarm heart, faintly imploring thy love; did I ever find thee hardened or deaf to my prayer? Thou hast always seemed to have forgotten my unworthiness, hast spoken to my heart, and hast suffered me to treat with thee, as with an equal: at that moment

I feel

I felt myself warmed with thy love, and ready to do thy will in all things; I regretted the time I had not employed in loving thee; my greatest desire was to be consumed with thy love; I mortally hated every thing that had separated me from thee, and from those sweetnesſes thou madeſt my ſoul ſenſible of. Thou knoweſt, O Lord! what thou taughteſt me at that time interiorly, without noiſe or words; and as for me I know that all the pleaſures of life have nothing in them that approaches to one of thoſe happy moments.

If falling back again into my firſt extravagancies I had loſt the reliſh of thy preſence, and oppreſſed afterwards with the weight of my corruption, I had returned to thee in order to be comforted; I found thee the ſame, always eaſy, mild, faithful, and merciful. What is become of that ſentiment, O eternal ſweetneſs? where have I loſt it? When at that very time, for my good, thou didſt hide thy face from me, and inſpire me with the ardor of ſighing after thee, of ſeeking thee, and of enquiring for thee of every creature; thou didſt not allow me to ſigh long, being nearer me than I imagined; I immediately beheld the light again, and found myſelf wholly changed. Then forgetting my baniſhment and miſery, I united myſelf cloſely to thee, reſolving never to forſake thee more.

Whence comes it that I have forſaken thee again, O thou God of my ſoul? Who has been able to ſeparate me from thee? Why have I deprived myſelf of ſo great a bleſſing? How have I fallen back again into obduracy? Is it not a greater evil to become hardened, after having received ſo many marks of thy goodneſs, than if I had never experienced it? I implore thy mercy, O my Saviour! ſuffer me no more to depart from thee, nor to be blinded by my own will, in the miſt of ſo great a light, leſt I ſleep at laſt in the hardneſs of my heart. Though I deſerve not the bleſſings of thy ſweetneſs, which I have ſo often loſt by my own fault; at leaſt reſuſe me not the knowledge of my own miſery, and of the need I have of thy help, for fighting againſt myſelf. Give me ſtrength to beat this heart continually, more hard than iron; that I may at leaſt preſerve a regret for the bleſſings I have loſt, and a hatred of the evils I have committed.

VI. Give me thy love, O divine Jeſus! and engrave it ſo deep in my heart, that I may truly ſay, as thy apoſtle did; *who ſhall ſeparate me from the charity of Jeſus Chriſt?* Is there any thing in the world that deſerves my love, and that can indemnify me for the loſs of thine? When I loſe thee for a friend, for any intereſt, or for a pleaſure, what advantage do I reap from thence? If I renounce

thy love, for avoiding a little pain, I am immediately carried away by the love of other things, which gives me a thousand dis-pleasures. If I forsake thee for my friends, I soon experience their infidelity. If I seek to divert myself, or take any pleasure without thee, I find myself in the end full of trouble and sadness. If I cease praying out of remissness and tepidity, I fall into temptation. In fine, in what manner soever I lose thy love, I remain deprived of thy blessings, languishing in thy service, and earnest in satisfying my corrupt inclinations.

Is it possible, O my God! that any creature in the world should be able to separate me from thee, and from thy divine communications? If I compare the time I spend in shameful amusements, the repentance remaining after them, and the meanness of those things with which my heart is possessed, with the sweetness and treasures I lose in forsaking thee; alas, how miserable shall I find myself! And what compleats my misery, is that I see it, comprehend it, and know not what detains me, nor what is the fatal weight that hinders me *from running after the odour of thy perfume*. Ah, Lord, let nothing separate me from thy charity! and since obedience, meekness, and humility are the ways which lead to thee, and the properest remedies for healing me, I beg them of thee with all my heart. Humble me as much as thou pleasest; make me diffident of myself, and careful to amend; that, as I owe thee already all that I am, and all that I hope for hereafter, I may also owe to thee the cure of all the evils I labour under at present.

When shall I behold thee, O my God! the sovereign master and peaceable possessor of my soul? I am so blind that I see not the paths wherein I walk, nor the dangers I am daily in of falling down the precipice; nor do I even so much as desire thee to deliver me from them. But thou, O Lord! hast no need of being instructed, from whom nothing is hidden, and who clearly seest all things, do thou work the wonders of thy mercy in this heart full of miseries.

O Queen of angels, advocate of sinners, chaste abode of our Saviour, and charitable intercessor for hardened hearts! our Lord will have me to obtain by you what I cannot deserve of myself. Since you see the evils which obduracy produces, make that living water flow from the source of mercy which you have given to the world, that it may fall upon me, and soften at last the hardness of my heart. Ye happy domestics of the eternal king! who are wholly penetrated with the divine love, permit me not to be
obstinate

obstinate and rebellious to the impressions of his spirit; diffuse a little of your plenitude upon me, and water this dry earth, that after being partaker here of your grace, I may be so in Heaven of your glory. *Amen.*

XX. SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

The false judgments that were made of his actions.

THE obduracy of the *Jews* produced so many other disorders in them, that it is very much to be wondered that the patience of Christ was not exhausted thereby. One of their most considerable disorders was, that they always judged ill of his person, words, and actions: a manifest proof of the poison concealed in their hearts, which by degrees stifled what natural integrity remained in their minds. For right reason is naturally inclined to judge of things according to their appearances; but what did they see in Christ that had any appearance of evil? The malice of their hearts must therefore have strangely obscured in them the light of their minds, which always judges advantageously of good, unless it be deceived by some colour of evil: but was there any colour of evil found in our Saviour's conduct? For that reason he said to them with so much assurance: *Who among you will convict me of sin?* John viii. 46. At that time they not only could not convict him thereof, but they could not even accuse him of it, what hatred soever they had against him; and they knew not what answer to make him.

II. When they made it a crime in him, to heal the sick on the Sabbath-day, he confounded them in such a manner, that they durst not reproach him for it any more. They blamed him because he called God his father; but he proved himself to be the son of God so clearly by his works, that they remained dumb. *Annas*, the high priest, having asked him an account of his doctrine, our Saviour referred the matter to those who had heard him speak in public, though they were his enemies; and the *Jews* being unable to lay any crime to his charge before *Caiphas*, but what was manifestly false, resolved to oppress him by their seditious outcries.

Those who had more favourable opinions of Christ, regarded him only as a holy prophet: others judged of him every one according to their private humour and dispositions. If he was with sinners, though his conversation was always holy, and though he sought

sought nothing but their salvation, yet he passed for one that loved to eat and drink with them. Some said that his doctrine was new, according to the custom of the corrupt world, which treats every thing as novelty, that opposes its old errors, and its ancient disorders. Others seeing him followed by a great crowd of people, who were desirous of hearing his word, and seeing his miracles, they accused him of being a seditious person, and a disturber of the public peace. Many judged, that he ought not to teach publicly, but in private and in houses, to avoid tumults, and a concourse of people.

Behold what the world is, it is still the same at this day that it was then. It approves of crowds of people at profane assemblies, and dangerous shews; and blames them in the church, at the word of God, at the sacraments, and at the most sacred ceremonies. We must not wonder thereat; it esteems what maintains its vices, and condemns what destroys them.

In fine, they arrived at such a pitch of wickedness, that, not being able to deny the miracles of our Saviour, they attributed them to a secret commerce with the devil; and thus they made *him* the author of so many wonders, whose will they followed in all things.

III. This contradiction was much more sensible to Christ, than it would have been to any ordinary man.

For, in the first place, he of whom the world judges amiss, does not always know it; and he is often deceived by the dissimulation of those who despise or hate him, pretending at the same time to honour, or love him. But our Lord beheld the bottom of their hearts, he discovered the most hidden sentiments of his enemies, and their designs of destroying him; and what touched him much more than the injuries done to himself, was the obstacles they brought to all the blessings he designed to bestow on them. For as love gives us a lively feeling of every thing that can hurt those persons we love, and as those passionate judgments fell back upon those that judged ill of Christ, so the love he had for them and for their salvation, rendered him infinitely sensible of the injury they did to themselves.

In the second place, the grandees of the world, though they be most exposed to public censure, are nevertheless, generally speaking, the most sparingly dealt with; because they are the most powerful, their protection is sought after, and their displeasure is feared. He that despises them in his heart, often commends them

in their presence; and sometimes praises them for the very things for which he despises them. Every one at least dissembles the bad opinion he has of them, either out of respect to their dignity, or fear of their power. But Christ, for the example and consolation of his servants, who were to imitate him in that kind of suffering, was pleased to undergo the unjust judgments of the world, with all the circumstances that could augment the pain thereof; and he suffered people to say to his face, without any reservation, the most disadvantageous things they thought of him.

In fine, men commonly find in their good intentions, wherewith to comfort themselves in the bad judgments that are passed upon them, even when they seem to give occasion thereof, by the defects that are to be found in their actions. But besides our Saviour's intentions being always upright, his works were so irreproachable, that though he had been capable of any bad design, the most critical and severe censurer could never have discovered it in his exterior conduct, so holy, equal, and regular it was; and yet we daily see, that a bad intention cannot be long concealed, and that some mark of it appears exteriorly at last.

It is easy to be seen in many places of the *Psalms*, how much sorrow these judgments occasioned Christ, when he says to God, by the mouth of *David*: *Pf. xlii. 1. Judge me, O God! and discern my cause from the nation not holy, from the unjust and deceitful man deliver me, Pf. xxv. 1. Judge me, O Lord! because I have walked in my innocency.*—*Prove me, O Lord! and try me; burn my reins and heart. Because thy mercy is before my eyes; and I am well pleased in thy truth.* He complains also in the Gospel, that the Jews put a bad construction upon every thing he did; and he said plainly to themselves; *Judge not, that ye may not be judged, Matt. vii. 1.* and by one of his apostles he says, that *judgment without mercy shall come upon him, who has not shewn mercy, James ii. 13.*

IV. If those, who so readily judge others, considered the injury they do themselves, and the chastisements they bring upon themselves, they would no doubt be more reserved in their judgments. For whether they judge the good actions of others in rigour, or condemn the bad without mercy, they ought to be assured, that the same judgment waits upon themselves. But if they should judge that bad which is good, let them hear the judgment of the apostle, *Rom. xiv. 4. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself: for thou dost the same things which thou judgest, xi. 1.* Or at least, adds *St. Chrysostom*, explaining this place, thou judgest amiss of thy

thy brother's actions, only because thou feelest the same inclination in thyself, which thou thinkest thou seest in him.

When an impatient man, for example, sees another suffer any thing with meekness, he judges of him by himself, and determines that it is not an effect of patience, but meer dissimulation. The impious and lukewarm look upon him as a hypocrite, who appears assiduous in prayer and other christian duties; because they judge that they themselves could not do as much but out of hypocrisy. The wicked attribute all the good works, which they see good people perform, to hatred, anger, baseness, pride, dissimulation, or to some other vice which they feel in themselves; for bad judgments proceed generally from the bad inclination which is in the heart of him that judges. Experience shews it but too often. The same good work, by which one man is edified, another is scandalized. Fasting, prayer, and pious conversations, daily produce opposite judgments; and there is no other cause of it, but that men, by judging in this manner, do not follow the light of their minds, but the disposition of their hearts; and the worse it is, the more advantageous are their judgments to their neighbour.

If two persons see a bad action done, the one will be touched with compassion thereat, and will endeavour to remedy and conceal it, the other will be for having it published and punished. Thus the same thing will excite mercy in the one and vengeance in the other.

It is therefore true, according to St. Paul's words, that he who judges ill of another, condemns himself; because he discovers thereby, that he has at least the root of evil in himself which he blames in his brother; and that, if God assists him not with his grace, he will fall into the same sins, which he believes him guilty of, whom he condemns.

Although we ought not to judge that *good* which is manifestly *bad*, since such a judgment would be contrary to that of God; yet it is certain, that we must always judge with so much precaution and reservation, that self-love and corruption of our hearts may have no share therein; otherwise, by judging our neighbour, we shall condemn ourselves.

V. When we know ourselves subject to that fault, we ought frequently to think in the presence of God, that we are more wicked than those whom we judge; and that if we commit not all the evil which human wickedness is capable of, it is an effect of the

the divine grace. This thought is neither false nor unjust: for it is certain we should not find so much evil in others, but because we are full of it ourselves. But if we cannot suspend our judgments, let us be at least upon our guard to restrain our tongue; that this malignity, remaining concealed, may not scandalize any one.

We must likewise turn all the bad judgments against ourselves, which come into our minds against our neighbour, acknowledge in ourselves, that corrupt root which produces them, and always seek the means of excusing others; and if we find no excuse for them, let us acknowledge, in the presence of God, that we are worse than they, since we resist him with all the knowledge he gives us: and that if those men who seem so imperfect to us, had the lights we have, and if they saw their own faults as we see them, they would amend themselves, and become better than we are.

Those that are obliged by the duty of their charge, to judge and correct others, ought first to humble and condemn themselves in their own heart, that they may not afterwards judge their brethren without the fear of God.

Let all, in fine, be persuaded, that those whom God preserves from the sins whereinto they might fall, owe him still more gratitude, than those whom he pardons after committing them: as I am more obliged to the man that prevents me from being wounded, than to him that cures me of a wound I have received.

This makes St. *Augustin* say, *Enar. in Ps. cxx.* "That God pardons us all the sins we were able to commit, and should have committed, if he had not prevented us by his grace; and that one man commits no crime which another might not commit, if he were not preserved from thence by him who made him man." Thus every one may with justice believe himself as wicked as he who appears so to him; ought to give thanks to God if he does not fall into those disorders into which he sees others fall, and earnestly entreat him not to permit him to fall into them.

VI. From whence we may also draw this consequence, that the servants of God ought not to be disquieted with the inconsiderate judgments of men, since they cannot avoid them, and since the infinite sanctity of Christ himself was not exempt from them. Let them be persuaded on the contrary, whenever they engage themselves in the service of God, that the world, not having spared the master in this point, will not spare the servants. I mean here by the world, all those who, in what degree and condition soever they be,

be, relish not the eternal truths, nor have any experience in virtue; such are not only the men of the world, but also ecclesiastics and religious, who forget the perfection of their state. It is true, that those who begin to serve God, are, for the most part, extremely sensible of the false judgments that are made of them; but when they shall be more advanced, they will support them without much difficulty.

Let them remember, in the mean time, what they owe to God, in order to encourage themselves to be faithful, and resolutely to follow the way he has pointed out to them. Let them consider, that if the world judges ill of good people, it is not from the hatred it has of evil, but out of the desire alone of discrediting virtue; for it loves vice, although it knows it is blameable: and that it may follow it more freely, it approves it, supports it, elevates it, and even gives its name to virtue. It calls *piety* hypocrisy; *zeal* passion; *justice* rigour; and so of others; that making virtues pass for vices, they may lose their esteem amongst men, and that there may no longer be any shame in being vicious.

If you were of the world, says Christ to his apostles, *John xv. 10.* *the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.* If virtuous men were truly wicked, and such as the world judges them, it would undoubtedly praise them as it praises the *revenger* for being courageous, the *proud* for having honour, and the *prodigal* for being liberal; and it would be favourable to them in those vices which it attributes to them by its false judgments. But because the world knows that the conduct of the just is its condemnation, it hates them; and persecutes them as wicked, in order, either to draw them to its party, by giving them a disgust of virtue, or at least to render them so feeble, by defaming them, that they may be no longer capable of hurting it.

But as in other things one considers not the judgment of the ignorant; so in what regards virtue, we ought to have no regard to the judgment of those who know it not, and have no commerce with any thing but vice.

I do not say this, that the servants of God, in order to support the interest of virtue, may regard all others as wicked; but that they may discover the artifice of the devil, who endeavours to shake their constancy by human judgments; that they may surmount this obstacle by their patience, pray for those that persecute them, in persecuting virtue, and take these words of St. Paul for their

the rule of their judgments; 1 Cor. iv. 3. *But as to me it is a thing of the least account to be judged by you, or by human judgment: neither do I judge myself. For I am not conscious to myself of any thing: but in this I am not justified, seeing he who judgeth me, is the Lord.*

VII. Whereon three important advices may here be given. The first is, not to regulate our conduct by human judgments alone, either in good or evil. For as men are weak and inconstant, they often condemn and approve without reason, and rather by fancy or passion than by the light of truth; and so their approbation or condemnation ought never to be in our regard, a sufficient cause for acting, or not acting: besides, by becoming slaves to their judgments it would be impossible to satisfy every body, since every one has his particular sentiment; and whatever we do, we shall always have the displeasure of disobliging many,

The second advice is, not to confine ourselves to our own lights, in what regards ourselves, wherein we are commonly prepossessed with self-love. Let us have an upright intention, and the fear of God; and let us afterwards, with the counsel of a prudent and virtuous man, whenever it is necessary, do what appears best to us and most agreeable to God. For we have such pressing obligations to seek to please him, and to labour for our own salvation; and we are likewise so miserable, that we ought not to flatter ourselves that God is satisfied with us, nor that we are justified before him: which would be attributing to ourselves a judgment that belongs only to him, and putting ourselves in danger of losing humility.

It is true, it is a temptation to good people, to be desirous of knowing themselves so far as to be able to judge with certainty of the state of their souls; but God, who loves us so tenderly, would not have concealed it from us, if it had been profitable for us to have known it. Our business is therefore to labour in serving God the best we can; without being desirous to penetrate into what he conceals from us, and to believe that we always do less than we ought; and that our judgment will never be more sincere, more equitable, and more perfect, than when we judge ourselves with most severity.

The third advice is, that he who would preserve the tranquillity of his soul, among the judgments of men, ought to elevate his thoughts to God, and consider, that being governed by a wisdom that sees all things, and weighs all things in the scale of the sanctuary, we can never lose any thing that is our due; that he who judges

judges us, fortifies and augments the good he sees in us by his grace: supplies what is wanting on our parts by his goodness; excites our languor; enlightens our minds to make us know and avoid sin; and that he pardons us our sins by his mercy, when we sincerely return to him.

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ, concerning the false judgments that were made of him.

O JUDGE infinitely wise! who penetratest the bottom of our hearts, from whom nothing is hidden, and whose eyes are always open on the good and the bad; thou seest my interior, and every thing that displeases thee. Thou knowest what I owe thee, and how ill I satisfy the obligation I lie under of serving thee. Where shall I shelter myself from thy judgment? *If I shall ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I descend into hell, thou art present,* Ps. cxxxviii. 8. and thou shouldst see me in the center of the earth, if I were there. Why would I withdraw myself from thy light, O my God! It is more advantageous for me to be seen and known by thee, than to hide myself from thy eyes, even though I could do it; because, being hidden, I should remain in my misery; and thou lookest upon me always with mercy.

It is true, I discover nothing in myself but reasons to fear and fly thee; but whither shall I fly that I may not find thee? And if I find thee not, who shall remedy my evils? Cast, therefore, thy eyes upon me, O my God, and my judge! Behold the corruption of my heart, the industry of my enemies for separating me from thee, my weakness in resisting them, my obstinacy in offending thee, and my negligence in serving thee.

Judge me, O Lord! according to my justice, and according to my innocency upon me, Ps. vii. 9. which is the fruit of thy labours and merits. Judge me according to the eternal love thou bearest me; judge me according to what is in thee; for what is in me is against me: and if thou wouldst have any good to be found in me, which might defend me against thy justice, communicate the merits of thy blood and sufferings to me. Give me thy innocence and sanctity. Read in thyself the reasons that justify me, and according to them pronounce sentence upon me. Consider, O Lord!

Lord! this inclination to sin, this opposition to virtue, and this root of all evil planted in the midst of my heart: exert thy justice against it, tear it up without mercy, and put in its stead, wholesome plants which may produce nothing but good fruits.

II. When I enter into myself, O divine Jesus! and find myself so full of malignity, I fear thy sight, and am obliged to say to thee with *David*, Ps. l. 11, *Turn away thy face from my sins*: but when I consider that thou alone canst heal me, I am afraid thou wilt not vouchsafe to look upon me; and I say to thee, with the same prophet, Ps. l. 12, *Create a clean heart in me, O God!* and every thing else shall be purified. Remember thou formerly saidst to *Noah*, Gen. viii. 21, *that the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from their youth*. O fountain of all blessings! who hast no less the power of re-establishing what is fallen, than of creating what is not; create in me a new spirit, that may repair the decay and ruins of my soul, and restore me the blessings I have lost.

Thou hast lived amongst men, hast endeavoured to heal their evils, hast shewn them in thyself the model of all perfection, and hast omitted nothing for instructing and enlightening them; but thou hast found them so corrupt, and so full of the mortal poison which proceeded from their hearts, that they not only refused thy blessings, but also judged of thy truths as if they were their own corrupted off-spring.

O Son of the living God! I adore that meekness and patience, wherewith thou hast supported so great a malignity of the human heart. Methinks I am in some manner more obliged to thee for having vouchsafed to suffer such unjust judgments, than for having been pleased to die: for the fury and trouble wherewith thy enemies were agitated, might well have drove them so far as to make thee undergo a death which thou desiredst; but they could not find, either in thy words or actions, any foundation for judging ill of thee, and were seduced thereto by nothing but their own malice.

III. How great is thy goodness, to suffer such an injustice! But, O divine Jesus! the world judges of thee also, at present, only by thyself. As worldly men seldom eat with their friends without committing some excess, they cannot imagine that thou humbledst thyself so far as to eat with sinners, in the sole view of saving them. As the world is in commerce with the devil, by the continual obedience it pays him, it believes, that it is by his assistance thou workest thy wonders. What does it behold in thee that can inspire it

it with those sentiments? Has it ever heard thee utter so much as one unprofitable word? Has it ever beheld the smallest levity in thy conversation?

It has found nothing but what is divine in thy doctrine; nothing but what is true in thy miracles; and nothing but what is edifying in thy life: thou never soughtest either its riches or honours; but didst even refuse them when it offered them to thee. Why then does it think ill of thee, O my Saviour! but because thou didst vouchsafe to be condemned for me! Thy nails, thy thorns, and thy cross, changed thieves into saints; thy wounds cured those of thy executioners; and thy torments softened those that tormented thee. But the unjust judgments that were passed upon thee, served only to harden those wicked judges, and to shut them in from the entrance of thy light and mercy. Blessed be thou for ever, O my God! for having been pleased to suffer such great contradictions, in order to comfort me when any such befall me, and to make me know what I ought to expect from the malignity of men.

IV. Behold me here before thy mercy, O my Saviour! Hark to the complaints and sighs of my heart. Thou sayest, that *our cogitations are prone to evil*, and I daily see, in the conduct of the children of *Adam*, the truth of thy words: they cannot confide but as evils the very blessings thou bestowest upon them. I come to thee, O infinite goodness! because I cannot fly from myself but by thee. I feel in myself the same disorder. I look upon that good which thou forbiddest me. What gives me death makes the sweetness of my life; and I seek comfort in what separates me from thee.

Thy law seems heavy to me, and thy conversation wearisome. I have always pain in pardoning injuries, and pleasure in committing them. It is a displeasure for me to employ my days in thy service, and a comfort to spend them in vanity. I prefer the pleasures of the body to the pure delights of the mind: and what ought to confound me still more; though I believe the contrary, but the faith thou preservest in my heart, yet I cease not from following the judgments of corrupt nature, which always draws me toward the earth.

When wilt thou deliver me from myself, O my God! What there in me but what tends to evil? The very blessings which thou bestowest upon me, often become for me a source of bad judgments. For I sometimes judge, in consideration of thy mercy, that I may abandon myself to sin; in consideration of thy patience

that I may persevere in it; and in consideration of thy goodness, that I may be saved, and satisfy thee, though I gratify my sinful appetites at the same time. Thus I am wicked, because thou art good; and slow in being converted, because thou art patient in bearing with me. I judge that I may reconcile the divine nourishment which thou givest me, with the grievous faults into which I fall: that thy justice will spare me; and that I shall be justified without amending my faults. In fine, I find nothing in me but false judgments. What shall become of me, O Lord! if the goodness with which thou sufferest my evils, does not also extend itself so far as to heal them?

V. Thou seest, O my God! that sick as I am, I feel not my disorder; and that I glory in the little good I do, or desire, though that action and desire proceed from thee. I would pass among men for another person than I am, and I cannot suffer them to pass any disadvantageous judgment upon me, though they can never believe me so wicked as thou seest I am. Heal, O Lord! by thy power, those such dangerous wounds; grant that I may lift up my eyes to thee; illuminate them with thy light, that they may behold in thee the blessings I find in thee, and in myself the evils which displease thee.

Permit me not to be deceived, for the future in my judgments; grant that I may see worldly things in their true light, that I may judge myself to be such as I am, in order to despise, condemn, and hate myself; and that I may judge of thee, O my God! as I ought; that I may esteem, fear, desire, and love thee, as my Lord, my judge, my father, and my sovereign good. Reform the powers of my soul, since thou hast created them for thee; purify my heart, since thou wilt have me give it to thee; make this den of thieves a house of prayer; and this abyss of miseries the abode of thy divine Spirit.

VI. One of the most dangerous illusions of my pride, is to set too great a value upon the opinion of men. Thou seest, O Lord! how far this vanity extends, and how hurtful it is to me. What good, or what ill can human judgments do me? I am truly such as thou judgest me, and I neither become better by men's esteem, nor worse by their contempt. There are none of them so wicked, as to believe so much ill of me as I am capable of doing. Though all creatures should join together, in condemning me for the sins I have committed against thee, they could not do me strict justice; because my sins are greater, and more in number, than can ever be thought of.

What

What do I then complain of, O ever equitable judge! I complain because men censure me: I think in every thing I do, on what they will think of my actions; I direct my conduct, measure my motions, and weigh my words, that I may please them; and I would willingly unite in my favour all their affections and commendations. But how vain is that pretension, and how far does it separate me from thee, O my God! It weakens in my soul the spirit of prayer, possesses me with unprofitable cares, gives me a thousand displeasures, and fills me with an infinite number of thoughts, displeasing to thee.

There is still greater vanity in the complacency I feel, when I think I have done or said any thing well; when I am informed, that people are satisfied with me and my conversation; when I desire, with so much earnestness, to know what is thought of me; not to amend any fault I have committed; but for my own satisfaction. Happy is the soul that is so pure and disengaged, as to neglect all these considerations.

VII. Draw unto thee, O Saviour of my soul! all my thoughts, sentiments, and intentions; have mercy on this distracted heart. It is not difficult to please thee, because thou art satisfied with a little, and thy goodness accommodates itself to my weakness. Thou hast made known thy will to me in those things which regard my salvation, lest I should go astray: but in those which are of less importance, and wherein it is not necessary that thy will should be clearly shewn me, thou art satisfied with the sincerity of my intentions, though they be not entirely conformable to thine.

When thou seest me ready to fall, thou supportest me: If I do fall, thou helpest me up again: and how wicked soever I be, I am never so very wicked, but thy goodness still finds some reasons for doing me good. I am always sure of satisfying thee, O my God! when I am willing to do it. But how can I satisfy men who see not the dispositions of my heart; very frequently judge of me by themselves; and, without examining any thing, condemn, or approve, what pleases them? One would have me to suffer, another would have me to be revenged; this thinks me humble, and that a hypocrite: I pass in the minds of some for a coward, and in the minds of others, for a prudent man; but though I should satisfy them all, what advantage should I reap from thence, for the salvation of my soul!

VIII. Infinite thanks be given to thee, O my creator and divine master! for having been pleased to deliver me from all these cares,
and

and reducing all my thoughts and obligations to one only, which is to love and serve thee with all my heart. If thou hadst obliged me not to offend any person, and to satisfy every one, it would have been impossible for me to have obeyed thee. *Gather together the dispersed of Israel, Ps. cxlvi. 2.* re-unite in thyself alone the multiplicity of my desires, and pluck from my heart the esteem of human judgments, whether they be good or bad. Permit me not to desire to satisfy the world which thou didst not satisfy, nor to listen to its judgments which judged so ill of thee. I desire only to satisfy thee alone, O my God! I offer thee all that I am: establish thy divine presence in my heart, elevate my mind to thee, that, disengaged from every thing that cannot fill me with thy love, I may live for thee, speak of thee, think of thee, sigh after thee, and repose in thee, O my Jesus! my just judge, my faithful friend, and my amiable Saviour!

O Mother of God! full of grace, and full of our Lord, who is always with you; how rich were you in the eyes of him who did such great things in you! but how unknown were you to the world! I conjure you, by those chains of pure love, which so closely united you to your God, your Lord, your spouse, your son, and your treasure, to obtain for me the favour I beg of you, that my heart may remain fixed to him, with an upright intention, and a pure love; and that no creature may ever separate me from him. O heavenly court! so agreeable to your king and your judge, who was formerly condemned by, or not known to the world; forget not, among the blessings ye possess in that happy country, him that desires them in his exile; that being possessed with the thoughts of your happiness, he may never be drawn away by the false pleasures of this life. *Amen.*

XXI. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

Men's murmurings against him.

FROM bad judgments commonly arise murmurings, which to good people are a pain so much the greater, as they are not accustomed thereto: whereas others are softened by time and habit. Murmuring is, as it were, the executioner of bad judgment: for a wicked heart cannot do much hurt, if it does not entrust the tongue with the execution of its bad designs, which afterwards accomplishes, not only in discovering what was hidden, but also by colouring it in such a manner, that there seems to be justice in it. As almost all men are subject to this vice, some more and others less; we ought not to flatter ourselves with being able to avoid murmurings, since Christ himself did not avoid them; and since all the sanctity of his person, and all the innocence of his life did not preserve him from them.

He suffered that persecution with the same patience as he did all others. They murmured against him, without any restraint, in the streets, in public places, in houses, in the synagogues, in the councils of the *Jews*, among the doctors of the law, and the chief persons of the nation; and there were few entertainments, companies, or assemblies, wherein they did not speak ill of him and of his followers. If any one presumed to defend him, he did but provoke others; and their hatred was exasperated, in proportion to the opposition it met with.

They said a sinner could not work miracles; and that he was truly a sinner, who observed not the Sabbath-day. The priests affirmed, that he was despised by the most considerable, and followed only by the populace. The doctors murmured, because he called himself the Son of God. The *Pharisees*, who thought themselves saints, made him pass for an impostor, that had correspondence with devils; they could not even suffer him to have any with sinners. They made a jest of his disciples, because they were almost all poor, and of mean birth. They rallied those in a thousand manners who heard his doctrine; and all those affronts returned upon Christ. The malice of the *Jews*, joined to an infinite number of false circumstances, which are almost always added to these sort of discouries, was the cause of so many murmurings.

and a pain so sensible to our Saviour, that we owe him no less acknowledgment, for not allowing himself to be withdrawn, by these cruel tongues, from his design of redeeming us, than for the very work of our redemption.

II. We cannot comprehend, without having experienced it, what force this sort of contradiction has for staggering the will, for taking away the inclination of bestowing favours on those that murmur, and for making us abandon the good which we have begun. Though God, always faithful in his promises, had exactly fulfilled that which he made to *Abraham*, of giving to his posterity a land abounding in all sorts of good things; yet he was pleased, to punish the murmurings of his people, that of that innumerable multitude of men, whom he had delivered from the captivity of *Egypt*, there should but two enter into the land of promise.

The Son of God being become man; suffered all murmurings, without ceasing to do good, even to those that murmured: he commanded his apostles to behave after the same manner, in the conversion of the world; and advised them to place themselves above murmurings, by telling them; that *it suffices for the disciple to be as his master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the master of the family Beelzebub, how much more those, who are his domestics?* Matt. x. 25.

It is a great comfort to the servants of God, when they suffer calumny, to know, that thereby they become the servants of him who suffered it before them. But in order to preserve that honour, and that inestimable privilege, they ought to be faithful in imitating their master in this point, by bearing, as he did, the murmurs of men. For the world being a place of miseries and troubles, there is no person but what is exposed to *these* as well as to others; and patience alone distinguishes the servants of God from the men of the world: these suffer only against their wills, and with a heart so full of impatience, that they often render themselves more guilty, even than those that make them suffer: but the servants of God humbly receive the punishment which they think they deserve, for the expiation of their sins; or, if they have not deserved them, they bear them joyfully; because they are judged worthy of resembling Christ, who has no less offered his blessings to those who would not receive them, than to those who have received them with thanksgiving.

III. The most christian and efficacious means of confounding slanderers, is to instruct them in virtue, by patience, meekness, and good offices. There is no time less profitably employed than that which is spent in hindering men from speaking. He that loves to murmur, seeks not to have reason in what he says, but to have always what to say; and he never has a greater inclination to speak, than when the greatest reasons are brought for his being silent. He murmured before, only against thy actions; but at present he will attack thy reasons; he will soon pass on to thy intentions; and whatever thou shalt say to him, will only serve to furnish new matter for his murmurings.

Silence, meekness, perseverance in good, and a holy and prudent dissimulation, are the strongest arms that can be made use of against slander: for if it proceeds from malice, it is sufficiently punished by the displeasure of not being able to satisfy itself against an enemy that does not defend himself. If it proceeds from ignorance, or a bad custom, it is presently put a stop to by silence, and continues not long.

If there be any remedy for the evil that is said of us, it is, not to regulate our conduct by the discourses of men, but rather to give them no just ground to blame it. If we regulate the intentions of our heart, and the actions of our life, according to the holy maxims of the gospel, we ought to give ourselves no trouble about what men say of us. Experience even teaches us, that there is no rock more dangerous in the way of virtue, than to consider what people will say; and that a man, who subjects himself to this law, will not long remain faithful to that of God. For there are few people that have strength enough for resisting a friend, a superior, an equal, and the torrent of a great number. The fear of displeasing one single man, that says, against all reason, whatever comes into his mind, has often more power for discouraging us, than our most pressing duties have for supporting us.

Wherefore Christ often foretels his servants, that they shall not be free from the reproach of unjust tongues; but in order to please him, they ought to shut their ears, and stick close to their duties, without considering what is said of them. Let not good people therefore suffer themselves to be moved by these discourses, but endeavour to raise themselves above them, by their constancy in the practice of virtue.

IV. Christ said, by the mouth of *David*; Ps. cxix. 1, 2. *When I was in tribulation I cried to the Lord, and he heard me. O Lord deliver*

deliver my soul from wicked lips, and from a deceitful tongue. He gives thanks to God, his father, for having heard him against those that murmured; not by shutting their mouths, but by giving him strength to suffer their murmurings. For that compleat victory of the just, which consists in confounding injustice, is reserved to the last judgment; when the impious, who have torn them here by their slanders, seeing them elevated into glory, shall say; Wis. v. 3. *These are they whom we had some time in derision, and in a parable of reproach. We senseless esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold how they are counted among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints.*

The servants of God ought therefore to be persuaded, that it is losing time to endeavour to appease those that murmur; that this life is short, and that the best way is to *suffer* with patience, to imitate our Lord, and to leave every thing else to him.

However this does not hinder, but that we may sometimes be obliged to give a reason for our conduct, either in public or in private, when the salvation of our neighbour, the good of the church, and the glory and service of God require it: but then we must do it with such moderation, that in exactly satisfying the truth as far as we ought, we admit no passion therein: and that we do not murmur against those that murmur; otherwise by justifying ourselves on one hand, we shall fall on the other into the crime of our accusers.

But because we almost always exceed in what concerns ourselves, we ought to follow therein the advice of some servant of God; and take care, above all things, not to complain too much against those that use us ill, and not to exaggerate the injury they do us: for the more just these complaints may appear, the more dangerous they are to the soul; by thus complaining, it loses the purity of patience, falls into presumption, dis-edifies neighbours, weakens the vigour of charity, and attributes to itself a part of the judgment, which belongs entirely to God. So that if after these complaints, it happens to enter seriously into itself, it will very often find more to correct there, than in the tongue of slanderers, of which it makes so many complaints. It is much better at that time to make them to God, who sees all things, desiring none but him to be the witness of what we suffer, pouring out our hearts before him, and remembering, that in silence and meekness of spirit, there is a hidden treasure of spiritual goods, which depends only on us to find out. Happy is he that finds it, and enjoys in secret, that precious gift which slanderers are unacquainted with.

V. Slander is an incurable disorder: it is therefore unprofitable to endeavour to heal it; and we ought to despise it, if we are desirous of preserving the tranquillity of our heart. For the most part of those who slander, do it, either to divert themselves, or to injure us. Those that slander merely for the pleasure of slandering, have little scruple about it, what pain soever they occasion others thereby, and do not imagine they stand in need of any remedy. Their pleasure is even augmented, when one is troubled at what they say; and they are by so much the more excited to speak, as one bears their words more impatiently.

For this reason, the ancient philosophers so prudently advised, to consider slanders as salutary instructions, and as a mirror which represents our defects to us. For what a friend excuses out of friendship, or dissembles out of consideration, or sees not out of negligence; the slanderer speaks it freely, and shews us clearly the vices we ought to be afraid of. Which made St. Bernard say, *Lib. de Confid.* That virtue would be weakened, and would lose its noble lustre, if it remained without exercise; that slanderers and persecutors are they that exercise it; and that by suffering their violences, and doing them good for evil it becomes purer and more perfect.

But I know not whether I may not complain of this same saint, for having added, that the religious were very subject to murmuring. That vice was certainly very sensible to him, since he could not resolve with himself to conceal it. May God grant his grace to all those that are religious, that this reproach may not fall upon them; and that we may all have continually before our eyes this sentence of the apostle St. James, i. 26. *Now if any one imagine himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his heart, this man's religion is vain.*

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ, concerning the murmurings of men.

I ADORE thee, O infinite goodness! O my Lord and my happiness! I give thee a thousand thanks for all the means thou makest use of, and for all the pains thou sufferest, in order to disengage me from the love of earthly things. If I had my eyes open, how could I remain one moment fixed to the world, whose malice is so great, that it presumes to rise up against thee, O my sovereign happiness! how could I live without blessing thee? Why am I in this life? Ah, Lord, put me in a place where I may praise thee without interruption; lead me into the company of those pure spirits who behold thee, prize thee, love thee, and adore thee; and whose whole occupation is to glorify thy holy name. But till thou bestowest this favour upon me, give my heart a profound contempt of human praises, and of all those tongues that know not how to honour thee. Though every part of our bodies were to be changed into tongues, and all the celestial spirits were to join us in praising what thou hast done for us; what would it be in comparison of what thou art, of what thou deservest, and of the love which thou hast expressed for us? And yet this single tongue which thou hast given to each of us, is employed in nothing less than in blessing thee.

Is there any thing in thee, O thou love of my soul! but what we might and ought to praise? Why should we refuse thee praises? Is it because thou eatest with sinners? observest not the Sabbath-day? and conversest with the poor and mean people, rather than with the proud and rich of the world? Is it because the *Pharisees* say, that thou art possessed with the devil, and art a *Samaritan*? that thou hast done no good to men? that they found nothing commendable in thee, nor have felt the effects of thy divine virtue? Were they not sensible of thy mercy and meekness? and were they so blind as to see nothing in thee but their own vices? How then, O my God! can I desire that the world should see in me what it has not seen in thee? and that it should say the good of me which it did not say of thee?

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Since *death and life are in the power of the tongue*, Prov. xviii. 21. and since the world has said nothing of thee, who art the true life, but words of death; *Lord thou wilt open my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise*, Ps. l. 17. With my whole heart I will praise thy infinite greatness; I will give thee thanks for the blessings those ungrateful people have not acknowledged in thee. I will bless thee as long as I live, O thou life of my soul! because they have murmured against thee, for those very favours thou bestowedst on them.

I adore that charitable condescension, O my Saviour! which made thee converse and eat with sinners, that thou mightest gain them to thee. For, alas! what should become of me, if thou didst converse only with the just? What hopes should I have of obtaining the pardon of my sins, if I saw none but saints in thy company? What would become of my wounds and infirmities, if thou didst not enter into the houses of the sick? Let the *Pharisees* say what they will of thee, thou art my salvation, my mercy, and my refuge. The table of sinners is no less suitable to thee than that of angels; and the fire of thy love will also the better discover its strength on a matter that is hard and difficult to be burnt. Enter, therefore, into my heart, O God of love! abide and eat with me: and since thou knowest how thou shalt be received, and the little I can present thee with, thou wilt have the goodness to bear with the poverty of this house. Every thing in it is poor, cold, and disagreeable. Thou wilt find nothing in it but faint desires, corrupt and sinful works, capable of disgusting thee. Thou canst not however, O thou Lord of my soul! dispense with thyself from entering therein, since I desire it; and thou inspirest me with the desire thereof. Thou wilt put all things there in such a state as thou wouldst have them, all blessings will come thither with thee, and thou wilt receive thyself therein.

Remember after saying, that *thou wilt come to him, and make thy abode with him, that loves thee, and keeps thy words*, John xiv. 23. thou hast not ceased to take care of sinners, to seek them, and visit them, though they neither loved nor knew thee; for thou comest to the just, because they love thee; and to sinners, that they may love thee. Raise up therefore thy spirit in me, O my God! fill my heart with thy love, and repair all the disorders thou findest therein. If the *Pharisees* murmur at it, the angels will rejoice, and I shall bless thee eternally for it.

III. I bless thee now, O Lord! for being pleased to take no other rest on the Sabbath-day, than that which thou foundest in doing good to men. When thy divine love, always active, after having created the world in six days, rested on the seventh, it was not that it might remain in idleness. The *Pharisees*, who were ignorant of that secret of thy love, murmured at the good which thou didst at that time: they knew not that thy Sabbath, O my God! is to take thy rest in my soul, and that for this reason thou hast commanded, that I should be taken up with nothing else but thee alone on that day. But let the world say of me what it pleases, I acknowledge and adore that eternal love, which induced thee, for my good, to create so many creatures from nothing. I adore that desire whereby thou art willing to dwell and repose in me; I adore that goodness by which thou callest thyself *the Lord of the Sabbath*, Matt. xii. 8. in order to bestow favours upon me on that day, as well as on all the others, in which thou didst create the universe. Let not my sins, O my God! hinder the effects of so beneficent a will,

I adore thee, O divine *reputed Samaritan*! vanquisher and enemy of devils. Those that murmured against thee, being blinded by the malice of their heart, knew not what they said; but I, who know this truth, give thee thanks for having taught me it. Thou didst appear, O my Saviour! under the figure of a sinner, and as *Samaritan*, unknown to the world. Thou travelledst on earth, and foundest miserable people thereon, wounded by their enemies, without help or remedy; concerned at their misery, thou carriedst them upon thy shoulders, dressedst their wounds, and shewedst them thereby, that thou wast truly our neighbour and friend.

Discover to me, O divine love! that charitable heart: make me sensible what thy joy was, when being called a *Samaritan* out of contempt, thy tenderness and compassion had obliged thee to become one for me.

On the one hand thou wast afflicted to see that those slanderers acknowledged not the grace thou grantedst them; and on the other thou hadst an extreme desire that they would permit thee to heal their wounds. Thou wast not pleased that charity towards our neighbour, of which thou hast given us so express a command, should make us have any neighbour dearer to us than thou art. Thou, O Lord! our best and true neighbour, do thou thyself observe the law which thou hast given us; perform thou in regard of me, what thou wouldst have me to perform in regard of thee; love me, make

make me feel the effects of thy love; be ever with me; have thy eyes continually upon me; since it is from thee I am to receive the power, strength, and light which I have need of, for accomplishing what thou desirest of me.

IV. I also bless thee, O divine Jesus! and adore with my whole heart, that great mercy which thou hast testified to sinners; when without entering into the houses of the priests, the doctors of the law, and the great and powerful of the world, thou hearest the desires of *Zacheus* the sinner, who was desirous of seeing thee, and receiving thee into his house; though thou knewest they would murmur thereat. Whence comes this, O Lord? Is it therefore possible that the desires of sinners, imperfect as they are, should be so precious in thy sight?

But is there, O my Jesus! a greater sinner than I am? I desire thee as *Zacheus* did, O my salvation! I desire thee, O my sovereign good! I desire thee, O my mercy! I desire thee, O my riches, my friend, my redeemer, my father, my treasure, my whole glory, and all my felicity! I languish with the desire of seeing thee; but I am so little, as well as *Zacheus*, that the multitude wherewith I am encompassed hinders me from seeing thee. All my comfort is that thou seest me, knowest me, and dost not require my desire to be perfect, provided it be sincere.

Grant therefore, O eternal truth! that this imperfect heart may at least desire thee sincerely. Look upon me with mercy, as thou didst upon *Zacheus* and *Matthew*. Come unto me, and grant that I may receive thee with love and joy. Bring salvation and peace to this house, abide in it always, and seek not for those where thou art not desired.

V. I bless thee, O my God! for all the favours thou hast bestowed on the world, and which it has not acknowledged; for all the actions on account of which it murmured against thee: and I give thee a thousand thanks for having vouchsafed to suffer the persecution of those venomous tongues, for my consolation. Teach me that sweet truth, which thy holy prophet declared to us, when he said of thee: *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy face from the disturbance of men. Thou shalt protect them in thy tabernacle from the contradiction of tongues*, Pl. xxx. 21, 22,

How happy a retreat is this, O my God! and how charming a refuge is the secret of thy countenance! When wilt thou receive my heart therein, that I may become insensible to all the discourses of men? they say what they do not see, and what they do not know. But what does not he see who is hidden in the secret of thy countenance? who is refreshed with the salutary waters of thy grace, nourished with thy heavenly bread? who enjoys thy secret communication, and possesses that hidden treasure which the world knows not? Why, O Lord! am I so sensible of what men say, but because I also love what they esteem, and do not relish what is hidden in thee?

If thou be my food and life, what matters it to me their saying I am poor and miserable? If I am wholly possessed with thy love, ought I to be afflicted when they shall say I am good for nothing? Let me, O my God! be unprofitable to the world, provided I be possessed with thee. Let men say what they please, provided I hear thee. Let them murmur against me, provided I enjoy thee. Let them reject me, provided I find thee. Let them tear me to pieces, provided I satisfy thee. What hurt will all their discourses do me, or rather what advantage shall I not reap from thence, if I love thee, O thou only happiness of my soul! Break asunder, O ye Heavens! be opened, ye eternal Gates! and let me behold my Lord, and sovereign good. But what do I say, O my divine Jesus! Heaven is deaf and hears me not; thy heart is my true Heaven, it has eyes to see me, ears to hear me, a will to love me, wisdom to know me, light to guide me, and beauty to charm me.

Thou beholdest me, O *Living Heaven!* and penetrest my most secret thoughts: shew thyself also to me, and make me see what is in thee. Receive me, inclose me within thee, and after that let them speak what they will against me. O Divine Heaven! Amiable Heaven! of thyself thou art neither hardened nor shut against sinners; be not so against me. If I am dry and sterile, let thy divine dew fall upon me: if I am blind, impart thy light to me; if I am loaded with sins, bestow thy mercies upon me.

I know thou desirest me, and thou knowest I desire thee; open then thy arms and receive me. I ought to love and bless thee; but thou oughtest to possess me: may I depart from myself and live in thee. O divine love! that grantest me the grace of desiring thee, thou knowest me and knowest thyself. Perform in me whatever thou pleasest, and ask me afterwards whatever thou wilt.

VI. O king of glory! who sufferedst thyself to be called *Beelzebub* for the consolation of thy servants, and hast so sensibly felt the pains that I ought to endure; and in order to mitigate them to me, hast vouchsafed to endure them before me in all their rigour: teach me to value the happiness of resembling thee. The world judges that a subject ought to esteem his king, so far as to suffer for his labours, injuries, dangers, and death itself: what ought I not therefore to do for thee?

When thou proposedst thyself as a master and model to men, thou knewest their weaknesses; cast thy eyes upon mine, O Lord, and tear from my heart that delicacy it possesses in regard of worldly esteem: thou knowest it would be indifferent to me, had I not a desire of pleasing the world. When will the time come, O my God! when blamed even by thy servants, I shall no longer desire to please any but thee alone?

I receive from thee all the goods of body and soul, and also expect those of Heaven from thee. Is it therefore so great a punishment to bear with wicked tongues for the love of thee? If I am so happy as to please thee, ought I not to be comforted when I displease the world? Thou knowest, O divine wisdom! the imperfection of my heart, thou seest how sensible it is of what is said, and how afraid it is of what shall be said. Illuminate me with thy light, that I may discover that truth; and support me by thy power, that I may give no just occasion of murmuring against me; that I may sincerely seek to satisfy thee; that I may not be withdrawn from thence by any thing that men can say; and that I may not lose time in justifying myself with them; but let my whole life be spent in the desire of pleasing thee, and of suffering every thing for thy love.

VII. O master of eternal truth! thou hast commanded us to pray for those that calumniate us; and thou wilt not be prayed to but that we may be heard. I beseech thee therefore, O my God! to pardon all those that speak ill of me. Thou knowest that they say much less of me than I deserve; and that the malice with which they persecute me, equals not the goodness with which thou supportest me: but thou, O Lord! canst remedy every thing, by giving me grace to amend, and to them that of slandering me no more.

Permit not any of those that have cost thee so dear, to perish on my account. Make them know the purity of thy love, that they may beg them; the sweetness of thy conversation, that they may seek

ask it, and the blessings thou communicatest to those that love thee, that being possessed with thee, they may think no more of me; not for my comfort, but for their spiritual profit.

Instruct those criminal tongues to sing forth thy mercies, that they may honour thee after having offended thee. Infuse thy charity into their slandering hearts, that they may help me to correct myself what they find to reproach me with; and unite us all by sincere love, that we may bless thee all together.

Obtain for me, O mother of God! and for all those that speak of me, a place among the domestics of your son. And ye blessed spirits! obtain that our tongues may here below continually praise him whom ye eternally praise in heaven. *Amen.*

XXII. SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

His doctrine being contradicted, and his works censured.

ONE sin that is grown into a habit, commonly draws many others after it, which are often even greater and more dangerous than the first: for, as St. Gregory says, *that fault which is washed away by penance, draws us by its own weight into new disorders; and a man who watches over himself, knows by his experience, that if he neglects to mortify the inclination which he feels to any particular vice, that vice presently opens a door to many others.* For that reason the devil applies himself above all things to entertain that inclination in us: and provided he obtains what he desires therein, he takes very little trouble about opposing us in the good we do otherwise; being assured that whilst this door is open to him, he will always find the occasion and means of doing us hurt. It is also of very little concern to him whether these sins be great or small, provided they be habitual: for though a person does not often fall into considerable faults, the lightest becomes dangerous when they are neglected, and according to the words of the wise man: *He that contemns small things shall fall by little and little,* Eccclus. xix. 1.

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This is often observed in religious houses, where every one is more taken up with the care of his perfection; one does not then fall on a sudden into dissolution by great faults; but by degrees by small negligences; neither do they all fall together therein: the evil begins by one or two, who are followed by some others, and at last by all. They fall back by degrees, slacken at first from their original fervour, neglect silence, and give way to dissipation; then they fall to murmuring, from thence into impatience afterwards into disobedience, and at last into a disgust of their rule and discipline.

Some lose interior recollection by slothfulness, others by their affection to trifles, many by visits, and by correspondence with the world. Thus, from these small threads, which appear nothing in the beginning, through the neglect of superiors, who are only attentive to great disorders, are formed such strong bonds as cannot be broken either by sword or fire.

The natural inclination we have to sin, will always produce those evils, if we are not careful to stop their progress in the beginning. What disorders, for example, does not the habit of murmuring cause, which seems at first to be only a diversion? From thence proceed lies, rash judgments, malicious interpretations, slander, false witness, anger, indignation, contempt, mockery, and afterwards the obligation of restoring honour, which is scarcely ever done.

In fine, the custom of murmuring at every thing, spreads so much corruption over our judgments, that good is called evil, and virtue itself is reproved, through our passion for contradiction, for weakening the authority of others, and for doing them all the injury we can.

II. We need no other proof of this, than the excess those fell into that murmured against Christ; since they soon went so far as to contradict his doctrine, and censure his works. The more clear his doctrine was, the more they endeavoured to obscure it; and the more admirable his works were, the more they endeavoured to destroy them.

The spirit of murmuring, for not being stifled in its birth, occasioned all these evils; and besides the injury it did to those that gave themselves up to it, it also extremely afflicted our Saviour, because it offended him in what was most sensible to him: for they hindered thereby, the progress of the gospel, scandalised the weak

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staggered the strong, encouraged the wicked, hardened the incredulous, and gave to Christ the displeasure of seeing himself obliged to employ the time in resisting evil which he had appointed for doing good.

When he made them hope for the pardon of their sins, they accused him of *blasphemy*; when he proved himself to be the *Son of God*, they said *that he gave testimony of himself*; and thus they eluded the virtue of the prodigies which he wrought for the confirmation of his doctrine. They asked him in public, in order to destroy his credit with the people, by what authority he presumed to preach and work miracles? When he wrought any in the synagogues, for authorizing the doctrine he preached therein, they turned out the people, under pretence that it was the Sabbath-day. They often assembled, in order to find out the means of hindering him from doing so under colour of the public good, and for fear, as they said, the *Romans* should think that they stirred up the people to sedition. If his secret disciples said any thing in his defence, they were run down by the out-cries of the multitude.

The *Pharisees* seeing that the truth always prevailed, said among themselves; John xii. 19. *Do you see that we prevail nothing? behold the whole world is gone after him?* Which clearly shews, that the malice and aversion they had in their hearts against his doctrine, was still greater than what appeared outwardly. But Christ knew their intentions, and by his divine wisdom, penetrated their most secret thoughts.

III. Seeing him one day followed by a great crowd of people, carrying palm branches in their hands, and giving him a thousand blessings, they were transported with rage thereat, and complained aloud because he did not make that multitude hold their peace. They proposed to him, in the presence of all the people, such questions as they thought difficult, in order to confound him; but finding themselves confounded by his answers, they were forced to have recourse to more secret artifices for ruining him.

Christ thus spent the three years of his preaching in continual contradictions, till his enemies, seeing all their endeavours unprofitable, resolved to seize him: but the officers, who were charged therewith, returned without executing that order, being charmed with the doctrine of our Saviour. They then forbade the people to follow him, under severe penalties; and as they were daily informed

formed of the new prodigies he had wrought, they took care strictly to examine all those that had been cured, in order to find, even in his miracles, some ground for condemning him.

Thus it was they behaved, in regard of the paralytic healed at the side of the pool; and in regard of the man born blind; who for having too clearly satisfied all their questions, was shamefully turned out of the synagogue. They would likewise have put *Lazarus* to death, who had been newly raised to life again, because many people believed in Christ on account of that miracle. In fine, they persecuted that divine lamb on all occasions; he had complained of it long before, by the prophet *Isaiah* lxxv. 2. and he has also complained of it since, by the apostle *St. Paul*; *Rom. x. 21.* *All the day I have spread forth my hands to a people that believeth not, and that was contradicting me.* He withdrew sometimes from *Judea* to give way to the storm, or else he remained secretly there for some days; and returned from time to time to see whether his enemies were not softened a little. When he disappeared, they required with severity, to be informed where he was; and when he shewed himself, they were vexed because they could not hurt him. They followed him every where, in order to find occasions of opposing him, and thus they occasioned him a thousand troubles, who sought only their salvation.

It cannot be expressed how greatly he was concerned at their ingratitude; but it is still more incredible to what lengths the malignity of the human heart runs, when it once becomes obstinate in contradicting the known truth, and the works of God. For what reason had they to persecute Christ in such a manner? He did not avoid their company; he disdained not to eat with them; he went into their houses, when invited thither; he healed their sick; and taught them heavenly truths, with an admirable meekness and patience.

IV. He never sought to diminish their credit, reputation, goods, or freedom. He even publicly declared, that people were obliged to obey the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, and to do every thing they commanded, although they opposed him in every thing. After expressing to him, that, upon his word, they were ready to acknowledge *St. John Baptist* for their *Messias*, they would not receive him himself in that quality. But obstinacy, in contradicting the truth, did not end with that ungrateful people. This is a persecution which good people, for a proof of their virtue, suffer still daily, not only from unknown persons, but from their friends, relations, brethren, from those whom they have obliged, and often, even from

from persons having the greatest reputation and authority in the world; and whose hatred is so much the more dangerous, as it is commonly covered with the veil of justice and piety. This cross is so severe that the servant of God stands in need of a great deal of constancy, that he may not let himself be cast down, when nothing is omitted for depriving him of all credit in the employments of his zeal.

It is the custom of the corrupt world, to discredit those who are most necessary to it, and from whom it might draw the greatest advantages; not that it fears any evils from them, but because it chuses rather to be deprived of all those benefits, than to receive them from others; and to remain in its misery, than to see the success and reputation of those who retire from it. A secret jealousy has more power over it, than justice, conscience, the love of our neighbour, or the consideration of the public good, and its own interest; and its first care is always to oppose the designs and reputation of the servants of God.

Such was the malice of the *Jews*; for nothing could be either more glorious or more profitable, than to have adhered to Christ, the Lord of heaven and earth, the holy of holies, the master of the elements, and the tree of life and death. But lest it should not be thought they had no esteem for him, they resolved to cross him in all things. When the poison of envy has once seized those that make profession of virtue, they become cruel persecutors; and it is almost impossible to reclaim them; because, under pretence of zeal, they abandon themselves entirely to their passion, and persecute virtue, persuading themselves that they at the same time support it.

V. Many things might here be said for the consolation of the just, who suffer a like contradiction, always extremely sensible to those who love God and their neighbour truly. But since the Lord whom they serve, permits it so for enriching their crown, it ought to suffice them to cast their eyes upon Christ, and to give him thanks because they are judged worthy of being treated like him, who is their model and judge.

Much more still might be said for the correction of those that are subject to this vice; but since they shut their eyes against the light, who can heal their blindness? Let us endeavour at least to hinder others from falling therein, by representing to them that place of the prophet *Osee*, iv. 1, 2. where God having said, that he could no longer forbear to punish the great sins of his people, because

there is no truth, and there is no mercy, and there is no knowledge of God in the land. Cursing, and lying, and manslaughter, and theft, and adultery, have overflowed, and blood hath touched blood, he then adds, to justify the terrible threatening, and to shew the height of that people's malice, that they were *as those, that gainsay the priest*; as if he had said, that the crimes of those people were ascended to such a degree of enormity, that they equalled that of contradicting the priests. For the priests having been given them for the preservation of religion, the knowledge of the true God, and the purity of his law; for reconciling them with God by prayers and sacrifices; to contradict the priests, is to deprive themselves of all relief, and to despise all remedies. What a crime was it then to contradict the sovereign truth, the Son of the living God, the eternal priest, according to the order of *Melchisedech*, the Redeemer and Saviour of all men? Whatever may be said on this head, cannot be spoken with too much exaggeration.

But because it happens that one may sometimes fall into this disorder, without knowing how great an evil it is to contradict the known truth; we ought to learn here, that the habit of contradicting good, is a kind of compact with the father of lies, a sin against the Holy Ghost, and an almost invincible obstacle to salvation: because every truth, in what man soever it is found, is a participation of the divine wisdom. Thus, to oppose the truth which is preached to us, is to oppose God himself: and he who accustoms himself to maintain, contrary to the light which is manifested to him, what he has once advanced; and will not retract his error when he knows it, by degrees goes so far as to lose all respect for truth and virtue, and to contradict, without remorse, every thing that is most evident and holy.

Wherefore the wise man advises us, that we *do not gainsay the word of truth by any means, and that we be ashamed of the lye of our ignorance*, Ecclus. iv. 30. For there is not a more certain mark of a weak mind, than neither to be able to maintain the truth, nor to renounce error. Truth is so beautiful and so conformable to our nature, that it perfects a man, and *makes him free*, according to the words of eternal truth, *John* viii. 32.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ suffering Contradictions in his doctrine.

O Divine Word, Son of the living God, eternal and sovereign Truth! in order to bless thee, I join myself to all the angels, to all the blessed, and to all the just; to all thy holy church, to all thy creatures, to all thy works, which glorify thee continually. Thou art *my way, my truth, and my life*. Thou art *the way* whereby I come to thee, *the truth* whereby I know thee, and *the life* whereby I live in thee; *the way* without danger, *the truth* without deceit, and *the life* without death. He who walks not with thee, goes astray; he who sees not by thy light, is blind; and he who lives not in thee, is ever dying. Thou art a *secure way*, a *pure truth*, and a *true life*. Thou art the *living God*, whom I serve, the *true God*, whom I adore, and the *infallible God*, whom I follow. Conduct me, O Lord! that I may never follow any other way; enlighten me, that I may continually behold thy truth; and live always in me, that I may have no other life but thee. And because good can only come from thy hand, deliver me from the evil which I ought to fear from my enemies and from myself. For if thou deliverest me not from thence, I shall soon fall back again by my own weakness, and shall then become so much the more miserable, as thou hast the more liberally prevented me with thy mercies.

Thou knowest, O Lord! that thy light will only serve to blind me the more, if it does not penetrate the bottom of my heart, and if I walk not whilst it enlightens me. Remember thou saidst to those who thought themselves enlightened, that God would have them to acknowledge their blindness, and for want of acknowledging it, they became more blind, *John ix. 41*. I acknowledge that I was born blind, and that of myself I shall always be so: *Jesus son of David have mercy on me*; grant that I may behold thee, that I may know thee in thy works; and being charmed with the beauty of thy light, I may follow thee every where. Herein I ask thee nothing but what thou thyself art desirous of giving me, and what has cost thee so much labour. Give me thy grace, that I may desire it: grant that I may merit it, by earnestly desiring it; and may I receive it afterwards with an humble acknowledgment.

As thou wilt not have thy blessings become profitable to me without my correspondence, so I cannot profit thereby without thy grace. Teach me therefore to know them, desire them, receive them, love them, and esteem them, that they may at last render me such as thou desirest me to be.

II. And how, O Lord! canst thou refuse me what I ask thee, though I be unworthy thereof, and know not how I ought to beg it of thee? Art thou not the same most merciful Lord, who didst *spread forth thy hands all the day full of blessings to an incredulous people*, rebellious and contradicting, *Isa. lxx. 2.* Since thou art the same, and thy arm is not shortened, or thy love diminished; and since thou art no less my Saviour, than that of all men, hear me, help me, and make me sensible of thy mercies.

Remember with what goodness thou treatedst that incredulous nation, with what meekness thou bearest with it, and with what patience thou overlookedst their continual contradictions. Thy light had blinded them in such a manner, that they could not suffer others to be enlightened therewith. They endeavoured to obscure thy virtues by their calumnies, and to remove men from thy knowledge and love. They opposed the clearest truths. They weakened, as much as possible, the authority of thy miracles; and in the presence of all the people withstood thy heavenly doctrine. They rose up every where against thee; became more hardened and wicked by the good thou didst them, more guilty by thy patience, more hardened by thy tenderness, more blind by thy light, more sick by thy remedies, and more liable to damnation by thy redemption; because they hated their salvation, and loved their perdition.

III. It would have been much easier for thee, O divine lamb! to have died daily, than to see the contradiction of those faithless hearts, which was the source of their eternal misery. The thief converted on the cross obtained paradise; and they in the midst of the temple, where they appeared saints, deserved hell. Nevertheless thou bearest with them; endeavouring to overcome their obstinacy by thy meekness, and their hatred by thy benefits. Thou couldst obtain nothing from them; they ruined themselves in spite of thy goodness, and after so much pains, thou hadst also the sorrow of seeing them perish.

Ah, Lord! turn towards me those amiable cares. I confess the truth which they did not believe, adore the virtue they persecuted, and praise the works they contradicted. Since thou didst so much
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for those that rejected thee, come, O my God! to those that call thee. Thou hast said, *open thy mouth and I will fill it*, Ps. lxxx.

III. Ah! let all the powers of my soul, and all the parts of my body be changed into so many open mouths, that thou mayest fill them. I dilate my heart as much as I can, by my continual sighs, and I desire nothing so much as to behold it filled with thee and with thy spirit. Come then, O Lord! *send forth thy light and thy truth*, with all the graces wherewith thou art wont to enrich thy servants, Ps. xlii. 3.

IV. I know very well, that if thou examinest my merits according to the rigour of thy justice, thou wilt turn away thy eyes, lest they see the vanity of my works; thou wilt shut thy ears that thou mayest not hear my voice; and thou wilt deprive me of thy sweet presence, since I am no less guilty than those who contradicted thy words and actions with so much obstinacy: for in believing what they denied, and adoring what they contradicted, I am nevertheless rebellious to thy light, and deaf to thy voice.

If I am miserable, my misery proceeds from myself, and not from thee. Thou didst instruct me before I knew thee; calledst me when I fled from thee; and enlightenedst me when I thought not on thee. If I sinned, I felt the wholesome reproaches with which thou inspiredst me; if I was lukewarm, thou gavest me fresh heat; thou preventedst me with thy blessings, supportedst me by thy grace, and encompassedst me with thy mercies: and yet I followed my passions, resisted thy will and law, and ran after those false goods which corrupted my heart and mind.

I am one of those whom thou so justly complainedst of, that *have turned away their faces from thee, and given thee their backs*, Paral. xxix. 6. Thou hadst thy eyes fixed on me, and I looked only upon the earth; thou soughtest me, and I departed from thee; thou lovedst me, and I loved creatures; thou wast wholly in me, and I was wholly out of thee. If I have not contradicted them by my works; and if I have not censured thy doctrine, I have abandoned thy service.

V. I cannot confess with sufficient sorrow, O God of mercy! how much I have resisted thee, and how much I still resist thee daily. I am supported with thy grace, and yet always weak; enlightened with thy doctrine, and always blind; filled with thy blessings, and always miserable. It is in vain, O my God! to lay open my miseries here before thee: they are better known to thee than to myself; but since thou beholdest them with the same goodness that makes thee bear with them, heal them with the same love
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that obliges thee to give thyself to me. It is true that after having so many times rejected thee, I deserve not to find thee at the first endeavours I use for returning to thee: but at least, refuse not my humble acknowledgment and sincere sorrow for having displeased thee. What have I gained by resisting thee? what have I remaining from my disobedience, but the displeasure of beholding myself before thee poor, abandoned, and covered with wounds; when I might be rich and happy, by the communication of thy blessings?

Thou art not, O charitable Father! like that wicked rich man, who saw *Lazarus* lying at his gate, without being touched with his misery: thou art not so sparing of thy favours, since thou freely offerest them even to those that do not ask thee for them; thou keepest them not for thyself alone, since thou art the Saviour of all. Give me a share therefore of those infinite treasures, which are contained in thee; give as an alms, to this poor sinner, the pardon of his sins; to this blind creature, light; to this sick person, health; to this negligent soul, fervour; to this rebel, submission; to this obstinate heart, contrition; and to this dead body, life. Since thou hast given thy blood to wash me, make me feel the virtue and efficacy thereof. Take with thee my whole heart, all my love, all my powers, and all my soul. Put an end this moment to my flights, revolts, and murmurings. Rescue, O Lord! from the hands of thy enemies what belongs to thee in me, preserve it, and permit it not to escape from thee any more.

VI. Wilt thou not deal by me in such a manner, O my God! as that the world may reject me, that it may despise me and judge me unworthy of it, from the attachment I shall have to thee? Thus it was that it treated the man born blind in publishing the wonders of thy power; but being cast off by the world, as a man adhering to thee; and being unable to seek thee, thou soughtest him thyself, didst judge him worthy of beholding thee with those eyes thou hadst opened for him, and of suffering for thy love, what the world looked upon only with horror. Then it was that he truly saw thee, acknowledged thee, adored thee, and followed thee; and that thou receivedst him for ever into the number of thy disciples. How happy should I be, were the like to befall me! If the having of eyes be an obstacle to that happiness, take them from me, O Lord! that I may behold thee: and if what I see out of thee, hinders me from seeing thee, do thou fix my eyes only upon thyself, and let my heart feel thee, that it may be inflamed with thy love. Dost thou therefore esteem those so much who are despised by this world, whose esteem I have always sought for with such an immoderate passion? Ah, how much am I to be lamented if thou judgest me unworthy of the grace thou bestowedst on that
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poor blind man! As soon as he saw thee, he became rich, and found himself delivered from all his miseries.

O wealth unknown to the world! why dost thou let me beg so long for such weak helps among creatures? Discover thyself to me, O my treasure! appear to my eyes, O infinite beauty! Thou didst require nothing from that blind man, but that he should believe in thee, and desire to see thee, and thou didst immediately shew thyself to him. Behold me here, O Lord! in the same disposition. I believe, and desire with all my heart to see thee, know thee, and love thee: refuse me not what thou makest me desire. It is true, that blind man had seen nothing before thee that possessed his heart; and the *Pbarisees* on the contrary, full of earthly views and affections, would not know thee. But thou hast not limited thy mercy to the blind alone: St. *Paul* was not so when thou struckest him blind to shew thyself to him. If it be necessary for seeing thee to seek nothing but thee, I consent for thee to shut my eyes, O Lord! *that they may not see vanity*, but only contemplate on thee alone, O pure light! O divine truth! O sweet and eternal repose of my soul!

O most holy Mother of God! O most humble handmaid of the Lord! who always preferred the submission of a handmaid, to the dignity of a mother, obtain that my heart may be humbled, undeceived in all the illusions of the world, and submissive to the truth, *that the truth may make it free*. Ye heavenly spirits, who behold, desire, and possess eternal blessings, since I was created for enjoying them with you, elevate my heart by your assistance above the earth; that being disengaged from these base affections, and from myself, I may live with you eternally in God. *Amen.*

